

October 2023

# FLU VACCINE

## What is Influenza (flu)?

As the weather changes to the cool Fall temperatures, we start to hear that it's time to protect ourselves against certain infections, like the flu. Most of us have probably heard of the flu or influenza, but what actually is it? According to the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov), "Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year."

Some symptoms of the flu can include:

- Runny/stuffy nose and/or cough
- Body or muscle aches
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Fever (but not everyone), and/or chills
- Vomiting and diarrhea



## Why is it important to get vaccinated?

It's important to get vaccinated since the flu is contagious (meaning you can spread it to other people, often times without even knowing it) and it can cause severe illness which at times can lead to death. By getting vaccinated against the flu you are helping to protect yourself, those in your home, and the people in your community.

What about for people that "don't get sick?"

- Just because you don't typically get "sick" doesn't mean you can't or won't. We can think of the flu vaccine as a means to prevent or decrease the possibility of getting the flu
- Remember there are people in your community or even your own family with immune systems that cannot fight infections like the flu or people that cannot get the vaccine for various reasons (like infants under 6 months), so by getting the flu vaccine you are helping to protect those that can't otherwise protect themselves from the flu

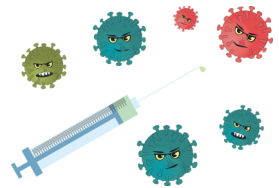
## Who should get vaccinated?

The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) recommends, "Everyone 6 months and older in the United States should get an influenza (flu) vaccine every season with rare exception."

["Some children 6 months through 8 years of age may need 2 doses for best protection"](#)

"Vaccination to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications is particularly important for people who are at [higher risk of developing serious flu](#) complications."

Some [higher risk groups](#) include: young children and children with neurologic conditions, racial and ethnic minority groups (like American Indians and Alaska Natives), people with disabilities, asthma, pregnant people, chronic kidney disease and more.



## Is the flu vaccine really safe?

The short answer: Yes! The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) states, "Flu vaccines have a good safety record. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines for more than 50 years, and there has been extensive research supporting the safety of flu vaccines. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects when they occur, flu vaccine side effects are generally mild and go away on their own within a few days."

### Need Help Finding a Flu Vaccine

- [Flu Vaccine Finder](#)
- [Find and Call](#) your local Health Department
- Ask your Primary Care Provider
- Ask your local pharmacy
- Contact Fostering Well-Being ([fwb@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:fwb@dshs.wa.gov)) or your Managed Care Organization or your Insurance
- Contact [Help Me Grow](#) (1-800-322-2588)
- Check Seattle Children's Hospital website for [vaccine vouchers](#)

### Resources

- CDC: [What You Need to Know](#)
- CDC: [The Difference Between Flu and COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Who is at Higher Risk of Flu Complications](#)
- CDC: [Flu](#)
- CDC: [The Difference Between Cold and Flu](#)
- DOH: [Flu Overview](#)