



What Everyone Should Know About the Flu and the Flu Vaccine

What is the Flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent it is to get a flu vaccine each fall.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5 percent to 20 percent of the population gets the flu
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications
- 36,000 people die from the flu

Some people are at high risk for serious flu complications, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions.

Symptoms, Complications

Symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Gastro-intestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, are much more common in children than adults

Some complications caused by the flu include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. Children may get sinus problems and ear infections.

How It Spreads

The flu spreads in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person, although occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before getting symptoms and up to seven days after getting sick. This means that you can give someone the flu before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick.

Prevention

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. There are two types of vaccines:

- The “flu shot” – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that does not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for “live attenuated influenza vaccine”). LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 5 to 49 years old who are not pregnant.

About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

When to Get Vaccinated

October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but you still can get vaccinated in December and later. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

New information released Oct. 5, 2004: Half of the flu supply destined for the U.S. was halted because of contamination. No one has received vaccine from this manufacturer. This has, however, created a severe shortage of vaccine. Therefore, the current recommendation is for voluntary rationing.

Who Should Get Vaccinated

The following priority groups (updated Oct. 5, 2004) for vaccination with inactivated influenza vaccine this season are considered to be of equal importance and include:

- All children age 6 to 23 months
- Adults age 65 and older
- Persons age 2 to 64 with underlying chronic medical conditions
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season

- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Children age 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy
- Health care workers involved in direct patient care
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children up to 6 months old

Other Vaccination Recommendations

- Persons in priority groups identified above should be encouraged to search locally for vaccine if their regular health care provider does not have vaccine available.
- Intra-nasally administered, live attenuated influenza vaccine, if available, should be encouraged for healthy persons who are age 5 to 49 and are not pregnant, including health care workers (except those who care for severely immunocompromised patients in special care units) and persons caring for children up to 6 months old.
- Certain children up to age 9 require two doses of vaccine if they have not previously been vaccinated. All children at high risk for complications from influenza, including those age 6 to 23 months, who present for vaccination should be vaccinated with a first or second dose, depending on vaccination status. Doses should not be held in reserve, however, to ensure that two doses are available. Instead, available vaccine should be used to vaccinate persons in priority groups on a first-come, first-served basis.

Vaccination of persons in non-priority groups: Persons who are not included in one of the priority groups described above should be informed about the urgent vaccine supply situation and asked to forego or defer vaccination.

What You Can Do

Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick. Serious respiratory illnesses like influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough,

Siletz Clinic Flu Shots

1. Our flu shots are still not here and with the shortages, it's not certain when they will get here.
2. Please note that the state of Oregon has imposed a \$500 fine if a clinic gives a flu shot to someone not on the list.
3. The clinic will not carry the FluMist.



and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are spread by:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Unclean hands

To help stop the spread of germs, you should:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Put your used tissue in the wastebasket.

Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing by:

- Washing with soap and water; or
- Cleaning with alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Note: You may be asked to put on a surgical mask to protect others.