



Fact Sheet

Why Influenza Immunization Is Important

- Influenza is a serious and potentially deadly disease that spreads very easily. Anyone can get influenza, but rates of infection are highest among children.
- Influenza vaccination is safe and effective and is the best way to prevent contracting and spreading the virus.
- Influenza can worsen chronic medical conditions or cause serious complications in people with a variety of chronic illnesses. Vaccination can therefore be especially beneficial to both children and adults with certain chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease and compromised immune systems.
- Widespread vaccination of children may interrupt influenza transmission to others, since influenza outbreaks usually begin in children and then move to the community at large.
- The annual seasonal influenza vaccine does not provide protection against avian influenza. Seasonal influenza continues to pose a far greater danger to individuals in the United States than avian influenza.

When People Should Receive Influenza Immunization

- In the United States, the influenza season may begin as early as October and end as late as May. The influenza season usually peaks around February, so getting immunized as soon as vaccine is available in your community and throughout the fall and winter is beneficial.
- One vaccination a year is all that is needed to protect against influenza, except for children younger than 9 years of age who need two doses at least one month apart the first year they are being vaccinated.
- Circulating influenza viruses usually change from year to year. Because of this, a new vaccine is made each year to protect against the viruses most likely to be in the community.
- The influenza vaccine is effective only for the current season, so it is important to get vaccinated every year.
- Individuals should contact their health care professional to request the influenza vaccine for their children, themselves and other household contacts. Many health care professionals administer the vaccine. Local hospitals, health clinics, retail stores and even some employers may also hold vaccination clinics. To find a clinic, visit <http://flucliniclocator.org> or <http://aafa.org/flu.cfm>.

Who Should Receive Influenza Vaccination

- Anyone wishing to reduce his or her risk for influenza should ask a health care professional about receiving an annual vaccination.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends annual influenza vaccination for the following groups:
 - All persons who want to reduce the risk of becoming ill with influenza or of transmitting influenza to others
 - All children from 6 months through 18 years of age
 - Anyone 6 months of age and older with certain chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, asthma, heart disease, compromised immune system)
 - Pregnant women
 - People who live with, care for or come into close contact with persons at risk, including children younger than 6 months of age and individuals with chronic medical conditions or compromised immunity
 - People 50 years of age and older
 - Health care professionals
 - Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities

Who Should Avoid Influenza Vaccination

- Individuals who have had a severe reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to eggs or egg proteins or a previous influenza vaccine-associated allergic reaction should avoid immunization.
- People who have developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously should avoid immunization.
- People with acute febrile illnesses (high fever) should usually wait until their symptoms subside. However, vaccination can proceed during minor illnesses, with or without fever.
- Certain groups should not receive the nasal vaccine, including:
 - Persons younger than 2 years of age
 - Those 50 years and older
 - Children or adolescents taking aspirin
 - Pregnant women

- Individuals with certain underlying medical conditions, such as asthma or diabetes

Safety of the Influenza Vaccine

- The injectable vaccine is made from an inactivated, or killed, virus and cannot transmit infection. This vaccine is licensed for use in all persons 6 months of age and older, regardless of health status. The nasal-spray vaccine is made from live, attenuated (weakened) virus.
- The most frequent side effect of the injectable influenza vaccine is soreness at the injection site for one to two days. Occasionally, some people experience a period of mild fever and fatigue for a day or two following immunization.
- The most common side effect of the nasal vaccine is runny nose. Other side effects include cold-like symptoms, such as headache, cough, sore throat, tiredness or weakness, irritability and muscle aches.

About the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)*

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* was established by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with “one strong voice” the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. *CIIC* seeks to address and improve the alarmingly low influenza immunization rates among children. Each year influenza causes approximately 20,000 hospitalizations and nearly 100 deaths in American children younger than 5 years of age.

Coalition members include Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Physician Assistants, American College of Cardiology, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, American Pharmacists Association, American Public Health Association, Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Canyon Ranch Institute, Center for Vaccine Awareness and Research at the Texas Children’s Hospital, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Every Child By Two, Families Fighting Flu, Inc., Health Industry Distributors Association, Immune Deficiency Foundation, Immunization Action Coalition, Kaiser Permanente-Northern California, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of School Nurses, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association, Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases, Society for Adolescent Medicine and Vaccine Education Center at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

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For more information on *CIIC* or influenza, please visit
www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org.