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# FLU - ARE YOU AT RISK?

Influenza (flu) is an acute infectious disease caused by various strains of viruses. Outbreaks of the flu usually occur during the winter because the viruses are most easily spread in crowded, indoor places. The viruses are transmitted by direct contact or by breathing the airborne viruses.

Flu symptoms often start abruptly - high fever, chills, headache, muscular ache, sore throat, dry cough, stuffy or runny nose. Diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting can also occur.

## Types of Flu Vaccine

1. Flu shot (injection) – made from inactivated (killed) virus grown in eggs.
2. Flu Mist – a nasal spray made from a live but weakened virus. Flu Mist is only approved for use in the U.S. and for healthy people ages 5 – 49.

## Who Needs Flu Vaccinations?

- Persons over 50
- Children 6 – 23 months
- Adults and children with chronic illnesses such as asthma, lung disease, heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, anemia, HIV (AIDS), and cancer
- Pregnant women who are past the first trimester during the flu season
- Healthcare workers
- Persons living in nursing homes and long term care facilities

Caution: People who are allergic or sensitive to eggs should **not** receive flu vaccinations

## Reactions To Flu Vaccinations

You cannot get the flu from flu vaccinations. Persons vaccinated develop antibodies, which protect them from catching the flu. Temporary

and mild reactions include fever, fatigue, and muscular pain.

## When and How Often?

Flu vaccination should be given **every year** during late fall or early winter (October to December).

This is because viruses frequently change from year to year.

Persons who are ill and have a fever should delay vaccination until completely well.

## Treatment

Antiviral drugs, given with 1-2 days of the onset of the flu, can shorten the duration of the illness. Otherwise, there is no specific treatment for the flu. In most cases, an attack of the flu is usually over in a week. If bacterial infection such as bronchitis or pneumonia sets in, the use of antibiotics will be required. Here are some suggestions to help minimize your discomforts when you have the flu:

1. Get plenty of rest.
2. Drink lots of fluids to loosen phlegm and prevent dehydration.
3. Use a vaporizer to ease congestion.
4. Take aspirin or acetaminophen to reduce fever, muscle ache, and headache.
5. Aspirin-containing medicines should **not** be given to children or teenagers who may have the flu because of the possibility of developing Reye's syndrome (a rare but dangerous disease affecting the brain and liver).
6. Avoid tobacco and alcohol.

If you would like additional information about flu shots, ask your doctor or contact the local health department.