



Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine

When should I get vaccinated?

Flu vaccination should begin soon after vaccine becomes available, ideally by October. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue to be offered throughout the flu season, even in January or later. While seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, during most seasons influenza activity peaks in January or later. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, it is best that people get vaccinated so they are protected before influenza begins spreading in their community.

Why do I need a flu vaccine every year?

A flu vaccine is needed every season for two reasons. First, the body's immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because flu viruses are constantly changing, the formulation of the flu vaccine is reviewed each year and sometimes updated to keep up with changing flu viruses. For the best protection, everyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated annually.

Does flu vaccine work right away?

No. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. That's why it's better to get vaccinated early in the fall, before the flu season really gets under way.

Can the flu vaccine give me the flu?

No, a flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness. Flu vaccines that are administered with a needle are currently made in two ways: the vaccine is made either with a) flu vaccine viruses that have been 'inactivated' and are therefore not infectious, or b) with no flu vaccine viruses at all (which is the case for recombinant influenza vaccine). The nasal spray flu vaccine does contain live viruses. However, the viruses are attenuated (weakened), and therefore **cannot cause flu illness**.

**Adopted from the CDC.*