

Flu 2012 Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Q: Where can I get the flu shot?

A: At the Public Health Family Care Centers from 8 -11:30 a.m. and 1-4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, no appointment necessary, no cost, but donations are accepted. Also see partner listings.

Q: What is the flu?

A: The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

Q: Who should get the flu shot?

A: All people 6 months and older.

Q: I am pregnant can I get the flu shot?

A: Pregnant women can and should get the flu shot. The flu shots will protect pregnant women, their unborn babies and even protect the baby after birth. If a pregnant woman has concerns she should check with her healthcare provider.

Note: There are preservative-free flu shots available for pregnant women and children 6 – 35 months. Contact your provider about preservative-free flu shots. They're also available at the Public Health Family Care Centers.

Q: Will I have to get two flu shots again this season?

A: No. Only one flu shot is being made this year and most people will only need to get one. There is one exception to this: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that children ages 6 months through 8 years of age who have never received a seasonal flu shot get two shots 4 weeks apart for the first shot (i.e. first shot Oct 1 second shot Oct 29).

Q: What viruses will this season's flu shot protect against?

A: The flu vaccine is updated every year to combat the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the upcoming season.

- It will protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season, and
- Two other influenza viruses (H3N2 virus and an influenza B virus).

Note: People who were vaccinated with the 2009 H1N1 vaccine or last year's seasonal vaccine need to be vaccinated with the flu seasonal vaccine this year. This season's vaccine provides protection against other influenza strains that were not in either the seasonal or the 2009 H1N1 vaccine last season. Immunity from a vaccine received last year may decline over time.

Q: Is there a new type of vaccine available for seniors who are 65 years or older?

A: Yes. Fluzone High-Dose is for persons 65 years or older. The health department does not carry it, but other providers may.

Q: Does the flu shot work right away?

A: No. It takes about two weeks after the shot for antibodies to develop in the body to provide protection against influenza virus infection.

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Q: Is it too late to get vaccinated after Thanksgiving (or the end of November)?

A: No. It can still protect you. Influenza disease usually peaks in January or February and influenza can occur as late as May.

Q: Can I get the flu from the flu shot?

A: No. The flu shot cannot cause flu illness. The viruses contained in flu shots are inactivated (killed), which means they cannot cause infection.