

#FLUVAXJAX

Flu Vaccine Fact Sheet for the Pediatric Population*

A Parent's Guide to the Flu Vaccine

1. What is the flu?

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory virus that can infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu is different from the common cold, and usually comes on very suddenly. It can be mild to severe, with an estimated 6,000-26,000 children younger than five years of age hospitalized every year in the United States due to the flu. Children younger than six months are at particularly high risk for serious flu complications. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. It is spread by droplets from coughing, sneezing or talking, as well as touching contaminated surfaces.

2. How can I protect my family from the flu?

The best way to protect against the flu is to get a yearly vaccine for yourself and your child. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older yearly. Pregnant women should also receive the flu shot to protect both themselves and their baby from the flu as research has shown that a mother's flu vaccine can protect a baby for several months after birth. One study, reported in *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, showed that the flu vaccine reduced children's risk of a flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admission by 74%.

3. Are vaccines safe?

Yes! Vaccines are made using strict safety and production guidelines. Millions of people have safely received the flu shot for decades. There have been many studies showing the safety of the flu vaccine and its ingredients. Additionally, studies have shown no link between vaccines and autism. The most common side effects from the flu vaccine are pain at the injection site and a low-grade fever.

4. Can I get the flu from the flu shot?

No. The flu shot is made from "killed" viruses. The vaccine is presenting this "dead" virus to your body so that it will make a memory of it and be able to fight it the next time it sees that strain. Each year, a new flu shot is made by scientists based on the 3-4 strains that are most likely to be circulating. Even if the vaccine is not 100% effective, it can decrease severity of the infection. It does take two weeks to develop immunity from the vaccine, so getting the shot earlier in the season is recommended.

5. When should my child get the flu shot?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend yearly flu shots for all children over the age of six months. While the CDC recommends the flu shot by the end of October, getting it later in the season can still prevent the flu. If it is your child's first time receiving the flu shot and they are between ages six months to 8 years, two doses are recommended, one month apart, for the best protection. Afterwards, it will be one dose yearly during the flu season.

6. Where can my child receive his/her flu vaccine?

Your child will be able to receive the flu vaccine at his/her pediatrician's office or at a primary care provider's office. You can also check with the Department of Health or the public-school system for the county you reside in to find out whether your child can receive a flu shot there.

**This document was created from resources provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics. You can access these resources at:*

- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/flu.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/family/flu-guide-for-parents-2018.pdf>
- <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/immunizations/Influenza-Implementation-Guidance/Pages/Patient-Education-and-Vaccine-Hesitancy.aspx>
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