

# The Influenza Immunization

Fact Sheet | 2023-2024

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## What is influenza?

Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. Some people who get influenza can become very ill and need hospital care. Illness from influenza usually lasts two to seven days; sometimes longer in the elderly and people with chronic diseases. Influenza leads to thousands of deaths each year, mostly among the elderly. Young children and those with chronic health conditions are also at risk.

## Symptoms of influenza

Common symptoms of influenza include:

- cough
- fever
- sneezing
- sore throat
- chills
- watery eyes
- headache
- runny nose
- loss of appetite
- fatigue
- muscle aches

Influenza rarely causes diarrhea or throwing up. These two symptoms are typically caused by a different virus called Norovirus (“stomach flu”), rather than influenza.

## How is influenza spread?

The influenza virus spreads when someone who is sick with influenza coughs or sneezes, sending droplets into the air. You can get influenza by breathing in these droplets through your nose or mouth, or by these droplets landing directly in your eyes. Germs can also rest on hard surfaces, like counters and doorknobs, where they can survive for up to 48 hours and be picked up on hands.

The influenza vaccine is the best way to prevent influenza. Other ways to help prevent the spread of illness include: washing your hands, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home if you are sick.

## The influenza vaccine

The influenza vaccine is updated annually because influenza strains can change every year. This means it is important to get an influenza immunization each year for protection.

It takes about two weeks for the influenza vaccine to start working. The vaccine works by boosting your immune system to make it better at fighting influenza – and at keeping you healthy.

Some people who get the influenza vaccine may still get influenza, but it will usually be a milder case than if they did not get vaccinated against influenza.

The influenza vaccine does not protect against colds or respiratory illness that are not caused by the influenza virus. The influenza vaccine does not protect against other viruses such as coronavirus or norovirus.

## Who should get the influenza vaccine?

- Everyone aged 6 months or older should get an influenza vaccination.  
The influenza vaccines (i.e., QIV-HD, TIV-adj, and QIV) may be given at the same time as, or at any time before or after, other vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccine for individuals 6 months of age and older.

## Who should NOT get the influenza vaccine?

- Infants under 6 months of age.
- Anyone who had a severe reaction to a previous dose of influenza vaccine.
- Anyone who has a serious allergy to any component of the vaccine.
- Persons who experienced Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS) with severe lower respiratory symptoms (wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing) within 24 hours of a past influenza vaccination and/or people who had previous Oculorespiratory Syndrome that required hospitalization.
- Those who developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a past influenza vaccination.
- A person who is sick with a severe acute illness with or without fever should wait until they recover before getting the influenza vaccine.

## What are the risks from the influenza vaccine?

- Most people who get the influenza vaccine have either no side effects or mild side effects, such as soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given.
- You might also notice headache, fever, fatigue, and muscle aches within six to 12 hours after your vaccination, and these effects may last a day or two.
- Because the vaccine does not contain a live virus, you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

A vaccine, like any medicine, can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions, within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination. The risk of the influenza vaccine causing serious harm is extremely low.

## When should I seek medical attention?

Call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital if you have any of these symptoms after you receive the vaccine: high fever, skin rash, itchiness, hives, swelling of the lips, tongue or face, difficulty breathing, severe dizziness, fits or convulsions, and/or other serious reactions to the vaccine. Let the health care provider know that you received an influenza vaccination.

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## Proof of vaccination

NAME:

DATE VACCINATION RECEIVED: