

Protect Your Family from the Flu

1. What is the flu?

Influenza (flu) is a virus that causes a common respiratory infection. Every year in the United States, up to 1 in 5 people get the flu.

2. How does the flu spread?

The flu is often spread from person to person through droplets from a sick person's cough or sneeze. It can also spread by touching a surface or an object that has flu virus on it (such as a doorknob), and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

3. What are the signs and symptoms of the flu?

- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body or muscle aches
- Feeling weak or tired
- Chills

4. How serious is the flu?

The flu can be very serious, especially for young children and those with chronic illnesses like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease. Every year in Los Angeles County, children are hospitalized and may die because of problems related to the flu. About half of the children hospitalized were healthy before and had no other medical issues. Children and adults with the flu may also experience:

- Sinus and ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Worsening of illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, and heart problems

5. How can you prevent the flu?

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated every year. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine to protect against the types of flu that are most likely to spread.



Prevention Tips:

- Get vaccinated every year
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or a tissue
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water
- Stay home if you are sick

For more information:

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health**
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip
or (213) 351- 7800

**California Department of
Public Health Immunization
Branch**
www.getimmunizedca.org

**Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)**
www.cdc.gov/flu

6. When is the best time of year to get a flu vaccine?

We recommend that you and your children get a flu vaccine as soon as it's available. The flu season can last into the spring, with most cases usually occurring in January or February, so it's not too late to get vaccinated in the New Year.

7. Are flu vaccines safe?

Each year, over 100 million doses of the flu vaccine are given throughout the U.S. Vaccines are safe, effective, and don't cause the flu. Most people have only mild side effects, like a low fever or a sore arm. The risk of a serious reaction is far less than the risk of having problems related to flu illness.

8. Who should not get the flu vaccine?

Infants younger than 6 months of age and anyone who had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past, should not get a flu vaccine. Your doctor may tell you to wait before getting your vaccine if:

- You are moderately or severely ill and/or
- You have a high fever

If you have an egg allergy, ask your doctor if you can get a flu vaccine.

9. Where can my family get a vaccine?

Flu vaccines are available at doctors' offices, community health centers, pharmacies, community sites, and public health clinics. Most health plans, including Medicare and Medi-Cal, cover flu vaccines.

If you or your children don't have a regular doctor, insurance coverage for vaccines, or your provider does not offer flu vaccines:

- Ask the doctor if your child qualifies for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Some children can get vaccines at no charge through this program.
- Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip or dial 2-1-1 for a list of no-cost or low-cost immunization clinics.

Your health care provider will recommend the vaccine that is best for you and your family and will let you know if your child needs more than one dose.