

# PREPARING FOR YOUR FAMILY'S VACCINE VISITS: INFLUENZA VACCINES



## BEFORE THE VISIT

### What you need to know about Influenza

Influenza (more commonly known as the flu) is a highly contagious viral illness that is spread person-to-person through sneezes and coughs, and can be spread through surfaces. It usually is a seasonal illness (October – May in the U.S.). One of the reasons the flu is so contagious is that people can pass it on before they even know they are sick.

On average, 140,000 to 960,000 people are hospitalized each year due to the flu. Between 12,000 – 79,000 people die from flu complications each year, depending on how severe flu season it is.

The flu can be serious for anyone, but those most at risk for serious complications are:

- children under 5 (particularly those under 2)
- pregnant people
- people over 65 years of age
- people with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease)

### Types of influenza vaccines

Learn which influenza vaccine is right for your family members.

If your family member is...	talk to your healthcare provider about...
6 months and older	quadrivalent influenza shot
2 years and older	nasal spray (for 2 years - 49 years old)
65 years or older	quadrivalent flu shot using an <b>adjuvant</b> (an ingredient that helps create a stronger immune response)
	quadrivalent <b>high-dose</b> influenza vaccine
allergic to eggs	quadrivalent <b>cell-based</b> influenza shot (for children 4 years and older)
	<b>Recombinant</b> quadrivalent influenza shot (for adults 18 years and older)

## MAKING YOUR CHILD MORE COMFORTABLE DURING THE VISIT

### For younger children...



**Keep it sweet.** Studies show something sweet can reduce pain. Ask your health care provider to give your baby a sweet solution of sucrose or glucose one to two minutes before the shot.



**Breast is best.** Breastfeeding calms and helps distract your baby. Plus the close contact is very soothing. So, if you can, consider breastfeeding your baby during vaccinations.



**Spray Away.** Ask for a cooling spray or pain-relieving ointment, which is applied on your child's arm or leg right before vaccination.

Tell your provider you want this **before** the visit so they are ready for you.



**Bring a Friend.** Bring your child's favorite toy, blanket or book to help them focus on something positive during the vaccination visit.



**Distract Your Baby.** Sing or read to your child to help them focus on you instead of the vaccination

### For tweens and teens...



**Stay seated.** Some people, particularly teenagers, can get dizzy after vaccination. It's a good idea to have your child stay in their seat for a few minutes after getting their vaccine just to make sure they are not dizzy or feeling faint.



**Congratulations for protecting your child's health and future!**

We know making the best health decisions for your child can sometimes be overwhelming. We here for you. If you need more information please visit [www.VoicesForVaccines.org](http://www.VoicesForVaccines.org).

## Fast facts about influenza vaccines



The flu vaccine is a 1-dose vaccine. Children 6 mos - 8 yrs getting their 1st flu shot should get 2 doses, 4 weeks apart



All family members should get a flu shot every year, usually in the fall.



On average, the flu shot is about 67% effective.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER VACCINATION

### Understanding normal immune responses vs. serious adverse events

Normal immune responses (sometimes called side effects) are how you know a vaccine is doing its job: your baby's immune system is recognizing an "invader" and preparing to fight it. But with a vaccine, it's a practice exercise and not the real thing so the immune response will usually be mild and go away on its own in a few days. Some normal immune responses for the influenza vaccine include:



**Soreness, redness, or swelling where the vaccine was given**



**Nausea**



**Headache**



**Fever**



**Tiredness or fatigue**



**Muscle ache**

### How to treat normal immune responses

The best way to treat normal immune responses to vaccination include:

- 1) Apply a cold compress to the injection site for redness and swelling.
- 2) Give your child a pain reliever (analgesic) like Motrin® or Tylenol® or equivalent generic. Call your healthcare provide for dosage.

### When to call your healthcare provider

Severe allergic reactions occur within second or minutes so in the extremely rare case that your child has a serious reaction, you will likely still be in the doctor's office. But more mild allergic reactions can happen several hours after vaccination (and rarely up to 24 hours later). If you notice an allergic reaction, you should contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Normal immune responses will usually go away within a week of vaccination. But if you are concerned, you should call your healthcare provider.

### Dispelling influenza vaccine myths

**The flu vaccine can give you the flu.** No it can't. The flu vaccine is made of a flu virus that is killed or weakened so much that it cannot cause sickness. If you felt like you had some mild flu symptoms after vaccination if it probably your normal immune response working.

**The flu vaccine isn't effective.** Yes it is. The influenza virus is a tricky virus - it is constantly mutating so the flu that circulated last year is probably not the same flu that is circulating this year. Scientist have to work a year in advance to create a vaccine they believe will protect against the next year's flu strain. That is why the flu vaccine's effectiveness varies from year to year. But even if the vaccine is not a perfect match, it still offers protection. And even if a vaccination person still gets the flu, it will likely be much more mild than if they did not get vaccinated.

**It's just the flu, I don't need a vaccine.** Yes you do. The flu causes an average of 45 million illnesses, between 140,000 – 810,000 hospitalizations and between 12,000 – 61,000 deaths each year. Many of us will get the flu and have no symptoms but we can still pass it to others, like our vulnerable infants or grandparents.

#### Serious Adverse Events

Serious issues are very rare (about 1 in 1 million) and include allergic reactions like:

- hives
- swelling of the face and throat
- difficulty breathing
- a fast heartbeat
- dizziness
- weakness



Unlike a rash, hives are usually raised and "blotchy" with less defined edges.