

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 the flu is each season. 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. The following table:

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 adjuvant (an ingredient that helps create a stronger immune response) • quadrivalent high-dose influenza vaccine
allergic to eggs	• quadrivalent cell-based influenza shot (for children 4 years and older) • recombinant quadrivalent influenza shot (for adults 18 years and older)

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.

40-60%

On average, the flu shot is between 40 and 60% effective.

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 to 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 stay in your seat for a few minutes after getting your vaccine just to make sure you are not dizzy or feeling faint.

Congratulations on protecting your family's health and future!

We know making the best health decisions for your child can sometimes be overwhelming. We're here for you. For more information, please visit VoicesForVaccines.org.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER VACCINATION

Understanding mild side effects vs. serious adverse reactions

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



Fever



Nausea



Headache



Tiredness or fatigue



Muscle ache

How to treat normal immune responses

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

- Apply a cold compress to the injection site for redness and swelling.
- Take a pain reliever (analgesic) like Motrin®, Tylenol®, or an equivalent generic. Call your healthcare provider for dosage.

When to call your healthcare provider

Severe allergic reactions occur within seconds 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

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, it's 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. Scientists 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 vaccinated person still gets the flu, it will likely be much milder 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.