

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Influenza (flu) is an infection in the lungs and breathing passages. It is caused by the influenza virus. There are different strains, or types, of the flu virus every year. The flu comes on quickly. It can cause a cough, stuffy nose, fever, chills, tiredness, and aches and pains. These symptoms may last up to 10 days. The flu can make you feel very sick, but most of the time it doesn't lead to other problems. But it can cause serious problems in people who are older or who have a long-term illness, such as heart disease or diabetes.

You can help prevent the flu by getting a flu vaccine every year, as soon as it is available. You cannot get the flu from the vaccine. The vaccine prevents most cases of the flu. But even when the vaccine doesn't prevent the flu, it can make symptoms less severe and reduce the chance of problems from the flu.

Sometimes, young children and people who have an immune system problem may have a slight fever or muscle aches or pains 6 to 12 hours after getting the shot. These symptoms usually last 1 or 2 days.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

Everyone age 6 months or older should get a flu vaccine each year. It lowers the chance of getting and spreading the flu. The vaccine is very important for people who are at high risk for getting other health problems from the flu. This includes:

- Anyone 50 years of age or older.
- People who live in a long-term care center, such as a nursing home.
- All children 6 months through 18 years of age.
- Adults and children 6 months and older who have long-term heart or lung problems, such as asthma.

- Adults and children 6 months and older who needed medical care or were in a hospital during the past year because of diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or a weak immune system (including HIV or AIDS).
- Women who will be pregnant during the flu season.
- People who have any condition that can make it hard to breathe or swallow (such as a brain injury or muscle disorders).
- People who can give the flu to others who are at high risk for problems from the flu. This includes all health care workers and close contacts of people age 65 or older.

Who should not get the flu vaccine?

The person who gives the vaccine may tell you not to get it if you:

- Have a severe allergy to eggs or any part of the vaccine.
- Have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.
- Have had Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS).
- Are sick with a fever. (Get the vaccine when symptoms are gone.)

How can you care for yourself at home?

- If you or your child has a sore arm or a slight fever after the shot, take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if after getting the flu vaccine:

- You have symptoms of a severe reaction to the flu vaccine. Symptoms of a severe reaction may include:
 - Severe difficulty breathing.
 - Sudden raised, red areas (hives) all over your body.
 - Severe lightheadedness.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if after getting the flu vaccine:

- You think you are having a reaction to the flu vaccine, such as a new fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **N880** in the search box to learn more about "**Influenza (Flu) Vaccine: Care Instructions**".

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