

The Flu and You

What to Know about the Flu Vaccine

One of the best ways to protect against the flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. Below are lists of who should get the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine. There are two types of vaccine — the flu shot and flu nose spray.

Seasonal Flu

Seasonal flu is the term used for the yearly flu viruses that occur, usually during late fall and winter.

Who needs a seasonal flu vaccine?

Anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get a vaccine. The vaccine is recommended for:

- Children age 6 months to 19 years old.
- Pregnant women.
- People 50 years old or older.
- People of any age with chronic health problems.
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Health care workers.
- Caregivers of or people who live with a person at high risk for complications from the flu.
- Out-of-home caregivers of or people who live with children less than 6 months old.

When should I get the seasonal flu vaccine?

The seasonal flu vaccine is already available in many places. The best time to get the vaccine is September through December.

Prevent the spread of flu:

- Wash your hands often in warm, soapy water.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- If you have a fever, stay home. Do not return to work or school until your fever has been gone 24 hours.

For more information:

- Flu information — flu.gov
- Kentucky flu information — healthalerts.ky.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information hot line — 1-800-CDC-INFO

2009 H1N1 (Swine Flu)

2009 H1N1 (swine flu) is a new strain of flu that began infecting people in spring 2009 and has since spread worldwide. Swine flu is spread the same way seasonal flu viruses are spread.

Who needs a swine flu vaccine?

These groups are recommended to get the swine flu vaccine before others because they may be at risk for developing severe health problems if they become ill with swine flu:

- Pregnant women.
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old.
- Health care and emergency medical services workers.
- Children and young adults 6 months through 24 years old, especially those with chronic health problems.
- People 25-64 years old with chronic health conditions.

Depending on vaccine availability, there may be further prioritization of these groups.

If you are not in one of these groups:

All other people age 25 to 64 years old should get the vaccine after the above groups have received it.

If you are 65 or older:

The risk for infection among people 65 or older appears to be less than the risk for younger age groups. People in this age group should be first in line to get the seasonal flu vaccine. They should wait until other groups have been vaccinated to get the swine flu vaccine, when there is plenty available.

When should I get the swine flu vaccine?

If you are in a high risk group, you should get it when it is made available. Health officials expect the vaccine will be made available in mid-October.