

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine FAQs: Children and Adolescents

1. What is flu?

Flu is a sickness that spreads easily from person to person. It is caused by a virus that affects the nose, throat, and lungs. Some people with flu may have mild illnesses, but others may be very sick and need to be hospitalized. In rare cases, flu can cause death.

2. How can I help protect my child from flu?

The best way to protect your child is to make sure they get a flu vaccine every year. Other ways to help protect your child from flu include:

- Staying away from people who are sick
- Covering coughs and sneezes
- Washing hands often
- Keeping indoor air clean and fresh

3. Who is recommended to get a flu vaccine?

Almost everyone aged 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year. There are very few exceptions. Children younger than 5 years old—especially children younger than 2—and children with certain chronic health conditions, are at higher risk of developing potentially serious flu-related complications. Talk to your child's doctor if you have any questions.

4. Do flu vaccines work?

Yes. Flu vaccines can help protect your child from getting very sick from flu.

Flu vaccines can also help:

- Lower the chance of doctor visits because of flu
- Reduce the risk of your child being hospitalized from flu
- Make flu illness milder if your child does get sick

5. When should my child get a flu vaccine?

Children should get a flu vaccine every year. It is best to get the vaccine by the end of October, but getting a flu vaccine later is still helpful if the virus is still spreading in your community. Some children aged 6 months through 8 years may need two doses of the flu vaccine during their first flu season.



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6. Can a flu vaccine give my child the flu?

No. The flu vaccine cannot give your child the flu. Flu vaccines contain inactivated (killed) or weakened influenza viruses that cannot cause flu-related illness.

7. Do flu vaccines have side effects?

Some people may have mild side effects that can feel like the flu, such as:

- A sore arm
- Headache
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Feeling tired
- Runny nose or cough

Side effects from the nasal spray flu vaccine may include runny nose, wheezing, headache, vomiting, muscle aches, fever, sore throat, and cough. These side effects are normal and usually go away in a few days.

8. If my child already had the flu this season, do they still need a flu vaccine?

Yes. More than one strain of flu can circulate each season. If your child was sick from one strain of flu they are not protected from other strains of the virus that may be circulating. Flu vaccines provide protection against multiple strains of the virus.

9. Can my child get a flu vaccine at the same visit as other vaccines?

Yes. Most vaccines can be given at the same visit as other recommended childhood vaccines. Talk with your child's doctor about any questions you have.

10. Is there treatment available if my child gets the flu?

Yes. Call your child's doctor if you think they may have the flu, especially if they are younger than 5 years or have a medical condition that increases their risk of complications. Your child's doctor may recommend antiviral medicine, which works best when started 1 to 2 days after symptoms begin.

