

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine FAQs: Patients Who Are Immunocompromised

1. What is flu?

Flu is an illness 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. Do flu vaccines work?

Yes. Flu vaccines help protect people from getting very sick from flu.

Flu vaccines can also help:

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

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. Flu vaccination is especially important for people with weakened immune systems because they are at higher risk for serious complications from flu.

- **Some flu vaccines work better for people who are immunocompromised.** High-dose or adjuvanted flu vaccines can help the body build a stronger defense against flu, which may be especially important for people who are immunocompromised.
- **People who live with or spend a lot of time with someone who is immunocompromised should also get their flu vaccine.** This helps protect the person who is more likely to get very sick.
- **The nasal spray flu vaccine should not be used by people who are immunocompromised.** It should also be avoided by close contacts of people who are severely immunosuppressed.

Talk with your doctor or trusted health care professional about which flu vaccine is right for you.

4. When should I get a flu vaccine?

Most people should get a flu vaccine in September or October. 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. Flu can spread through winter and even into spring. Talk with your doctor or trusted health care professional about the best timing for you, especially if you are receiving treatment that affects your immune system.



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5. Can a flu vaccine give me flu?

No. The flu vaccine cannot give you flu.

6. Do flu vaccines have side effects?

Some people may have mild side effects that can feel like 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.

7. If I already had flu this season, do I still need a flu vaccine?

Yes. More than one strain of flu can spread each season. Having been sick from one strain of flu does not protect you from other strains that may be circulating. Flu vaccines provide protection against multiple strains of the virus.

8. Can I get a flu vaccine at the same visit as other vaccines?

Yes. Most vaccines can be given at the same visit. Talk with your doctor to see what is right for you.

9. Is there treatment available if I get flu?

Yes. Contact your doctor as soon as possible if you think you have flu. This is especially important for people with weakened immune systems because they are at higher risk for complications. Your doctor may recommend antiviral medicine, which works best when started within 1 to 2 days after symptoms begin.

