



FLU FAQs

Updated December 10, 2013

Q: Who needs a flu vaccination this year?

A: Everyone ages 6 months and older should receive an annual influenza vaccination, which will protect you and those you care about from the flu. A seasonal flu vaccination is especially recommended for people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, people living or caring for babies 6 months and younger **or people who are unable to be vaccinated because of health reasons**, and all health care workers.

Q: Will this be a bad flu season?

A: The flu is unpredictable and every flu season is different. Influenza can affect people differently. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.

Q: When will flu season start?

A: In Oregon, flu season usually doesn't ramp up until after the New Year, though it has started as early as October in the past. It's impossible to predict exactly when the season will begin.

Q: I got a flu shot last year. Will I need to get another shot this year?

A: Because immunity declines over the course of a year (especially for the elderly) and the flu strains change, people who received a seasonal flu immunization last year should get another one this year.

Q: When should I get my flu shot?

A: People should get their flu shot as soon as it becomes available. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza. Flu season begins as early as October and is unpredictable. Immunity will last through the season.

Q: When will this year's flu shot be available?

A: Seasonal flu vaccine, which is manufactured by strict federal standards and thoroughly tested before it is offered to the public, arrived in Oregon in September and will continue through the end of the year.

Q: I don't like needles. Is there another way to get a flu shot?

A: There is a nasal spray for healthy people ages 2 through 49 years who are not pregnant. And last year, the FDA approved an intradermal influenza vaccine for people ages 18-64 that is injected into the skin instead of the muscle. It uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot and requires fewer antigens (the part of vaccine that helps your body build up protection against flu viruses).

Q: Does getting a flu shot guarantee I won't get the flu?

A: A flu vaccination is not 100 percent effective for everyone, but those few people who still get the flu after immunization have a much greater chance of avoiding complications and hospitalization.

Q: Does my child need two doses of flu vaccine?

A: Some children up to age 9 may need two doses of seasonal flu to provide the best protection. Parents should check with their health care provider.

Q: What can I do to avoid catching the flu?

A: Prevention is a crucial part of staying healthy during flu season.

- Cover your cough
- Wash your hands
- Stay home when you're sick
- Get vaccinated

Q: Where can I get more information about flu?

A: Ask your health care provider or visit flu.oregon.gov.