

Vaccine Safety

CDC 2012-2013 Flu Season

Word count: 568

Getting a flu vaccine is a safe way to prevent serious illness

For millions of people each year, the flu can bring a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches, chills, and miserable days spent in bed instead of at work or school. However, you may not realize that more than 200,000 people are estimated to end up in the hospital from flu complications each year in the United States. And while unpredictable, the flu can be deadly. Between 1976 and 2007, CDC estimates that annual flu-associated deaths in the United States have ranged from a low of about 3,000 people to a high of about 49,000 people.

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season. The vaccine is a safe way to protect yourself from the flu and potentially serious complications like pneumonia.

CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older get a yearly flu vaccine. Getting the vaccine will help protect you during flu season. Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, retail stores and pharmacies, and health centers, as well as by many employers and schools.

Flu vaccines are produced each year based on worldwide surveillance to select the three viruses that research indicates are the most likely to cause widespread illness. This year's seasonal flu vaccine will protect against an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus and an influenza B virus. Even if you got vaccinated last season, you need a vaccine this season to protect against this year's flu. That is because immunity from vaccination declines over time. A yearly vaccination will give you optimal protection.

This year's flu vaccines are being made using the same production and safety methods that have been standard for decades, during which hundreds of millions of flu vaccines have been safely given.

"Stringent vaccine safety processes are followed every year for flu vaccines. Before flu vaccines are approved, they undergo careful testing, and each batch is checked for purity and strength before it is released," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service and CDC's Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "Seasonal flu vaccines have been given for more than 50 years, and have consistently had a very safe track record."

The most common side effects from flu shots have been soreness, redness or tenderness where the shot was given; fever; and aches. Some people who have gotten the nasal spray flu vaccine have had a runny nose, cough, or nasal congestion. Neither the flu shot nor the nasal spray vaccine can give you the flu.

Every year, CDC works closely with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), health care providers, state and local health departments, and other partners to ensure the highest safety standards for all flu

vaccines. CDC and FDA share in the responsibility of monitoring the safety of vaccines and ensuring systems are in place to promptly detect unexpected health problems following vaccination. “Vaccines are medicines, and taking any medicine can carry some risk,” adds Dr. Schuchat. “With the flu vaccine, that risk is extremely small. The risks associated with getting the flu are far greater.”

For more information about the dangers of flu and the benefits and safety of the flu vaccine, talk to your doctor or nurse, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>, or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

###