

# People 65 Years and Older Need a Flu Shot

FIGHT FLU



Information for adults 65 years and older

**Influenza (flu) can be a serious illness, especially for older adults.**

*FACT: People 65 years and older are at high risk of developing serious complications from flu, compared with young, healthy adults.*

This risk is due in part to changes in immune defenses with increasing age. While flu seasons vary in severity during most seasons, people 65 years and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu disease. In recent years, it's estimated that between 70 percent and 85 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths in the United States occur among people 65 years and older, and between about 50 percent and 70 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group.

**An annual flu vaccine is the best way to reduce your risk of flu and its potentially serious consequences.**

*FACT: While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works, vaccination is the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications.*

Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness and more serious flu outcomes that can result in hospitalization or even death in older people. While some people who get vaccinated may still get sick, flu vaccination has been shown in several studies to reduce severity of illness in those people.

People 65 years and older should get a flu shot, not a nasal spray vaccine. They can get any flu shot approved for use in their age group with no preference for any one vaccine over another. There are regular flu shots and there also are also enhanced vaccines approved for use in people 65 and older that may provide a better immune response.

1. **A high dose flu vaccine** (Fluzone® High-Dose) contains 4 times the amount of antigen as a regular flu shot. The additional antigen creates a stronger immune response (more antibody) in the person getting vaccinated.
2. **An adjuvanted vaccine** (FLUAD™) is a standard dose flu vaccine with an adjuvant added. An adjuvant is an ingredient added to a vaccine to help create a stronger immune response to vaccination.



For more information, visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)  
or call **1-800-CDC-INFO**



**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Flu shots have a good safety record and do not cause flu.

**FACT:** *The side effects of flu shots are mild when compared to potentially serious consequences of flu infection.*

After getting your flu shot, you may experience some mild side effects. The most common side effects include soreness, tenderness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given. Sometimes you might have headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea or feel tired. The high dose and adjuvanted flu vaccines may result in more of the mild side effects.

## Long-term medical conditions can also put you at high risk of serious flu complications.

**FACT:** *Flu can make long-term health problems worse, even if they are well managed.*

Diabetes, asthma, and chronic heart disease (even if well managed) are among the most common long-term medical conditions that place people at high risk of developing serious flu complications. It is particularly important that all adults with these or other chronic medical conditions get a flu shot every year.

**FACT:** *There are prescription drugs that can treat influenza virus infections. People 65 years and older should be treated with influenza antiviral drugs if they get sick with flu.*

If you have flu symptoms--even if you had a flu shot--call your doctor, nurse, or clinic. Doctors can prescribe medicine, called antiviral drugs, to treat flu and lessen the chance of serious illness. These medicines work better the sooner they are started. Call if you have any or all of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick with flu (for example, people who are in the hospital), and people who are sick with flu and are at high risk of developing serious flu complications, like people 65 years and older.



**Take control of your health and fight flu this season with an annual flu vaccine.**

**For more information about the flu or the vaccine,  
call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.**