



What you need to know about the **Flu vaccine (influenza)**

Influenza, which is commonly called the flu, is a virus that infects the nose, throat and sometimes lungs. It can cause serious health problems in adults over age 65, young children and people of any age with certain medical conditions. Vaccination is the best way to avoid getting the flu and spreading it to others. To learn more, read the questions and answers below. Talk to your primary care provider about how to keep your family healthy during flu season.

If I'm healthy and have no medical concerns, do I need a flu shot?

You can still get very sick from the flu even if you're healthy – and you can spread it to people at higher risk or those who can't get vaccinated. Flu vaccines prevent millions of flu infections each year. They also reduce the chances of the flu making you sick enough to go to the doctor or, worse, be hospitalized. Most people over six months of age should get the flu vaccine each year.

Are flu vaccines safe? Does it cause side effects?

The flu vaccine is safe for most people who are six months and older. There are different types of flu vaccines for varying ages and health conditions, including a nasal spray for people who have anxiety over getting shots. Some people do experience minor side effects that feel like a mild flu (but it is not actually the flu virus, so it's not contagious).

Who should not get the flu vaccine?

People with certain allergies, infants younger than six months old, and older adults with certain medical conditions should not receive some types of flu vaccines. Talk to your primary care provider if you have concerns. Ask which type of flu vaccine is best for you.

Is the flu vaccine safe for pregnant women?

Most flu shots are safe and approved for pregnant women, but the nasal spray and certain shots are not recommended. If you are pregnant or may be pregnant, talk to your primary care provider before getting a flu vaccine. For those who can safely get the shot, the flu vaccine helps protect the mom-to-be during and after pregnancy. It can also protect the infant from the flu during the first few months of life.

To learn more about the influenza vaccine or other routine immunizations for your family, talk to your primary care provider or visit beimmunekansas.org.

