



## FLU Q & A

### **Why get vaccinated against influenza (flu)?**

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease that can lead to serious complications, hospitalizations, or even death. Its symptoms include chills, fever, body aches, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, and fatigue. Anyone can get the flu and vaccination is the single best way to protect against influenza. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to family, friends and babies too young to be vaccinated. Getting the flu also means multiple lost work days and missed school.

### **Who should get a flu vaccine?**

Everyone is at risk for seasonal influenza. Health experts now recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get vaccinated against influenza. Each flu season, different flu viruses can spread and they can affect people differently based on their body's ability to fight infection. Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu, including: people 65 years and older; children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old; people with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart disease, neurological conditions and certain other health conditions; and pregnant women.

### **Since the vaccine formulation is the same as last year's flu vaccine, do I need to get vaccinated again this year?**

Yes. It is important to get vaccinated every year, even if the strains in the vaccine do not change. The protection received the previous year will diminish over time and may be too low to provide protection into the next year.

### **What kinds of vaccines are available?**

1. An inactivated (killed) vaccine, also known as the flu shot, which is given by injection into the muscle , and
2. A live, attenuated (weakened) vaccine, also known as the nasal spray, which is sprayed into the nostrils.

### **Can the flu shot or nasal spray give you the flu?**

Flu vaccines are safe and can not give you the flu because they are made from killed or much weakened virus, but there may be some mild side effects from the two different vaccines.

The most common side effects from the flu shot are soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot is given.

Side effects from the nasal spray vaccine include runny nose, cough or nasal congestion.

### **Which flu vaccine is for pregnant women?**

The flu shot (not the nasal spray) is safe for pregnant women during any trimester. Given during pregnancy, the flu shot has been shown to protect both the mother and her baby. After baby is born, he or she will be protected from the flu for up to 6 months of age from the antibodies passed on from mom. Nursing mothers can receive either the flu shot or the nasal spray vaccine.

### **What about people who get seasonal flu vaccine and still get sick with flu-like symptoms?**

There are several reasons why someone might get flu-like symptoms even after they have been vaccinated against seasonal flu,

1. People may be exposed to one of the influenza viruses in the vaccine shortly before getting vaccinated or during the two-week period that it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated.
2. People may become ill from non-flu viruses that are circulating during the flu season. Flu vaccine will not protect people from respiratory illness that is not caused by the flu viruses.
3. A person may be exposed to an influenza virus that is very different from the viruses included in the vaccine. The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends largely on the match between viruses in the vaccine and those in circulation. There are many different influenza viruses.
4. Unfortunately, some people can remain unprotected from flu despite getting the vaccine. This is more likely to occur among people that have weakened immune systems or the elderly. However, even among these people, a flu vaccine can still help prevent complications.

### **When is the best time to get vaccinated?**

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), recommends that people begin getting the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available in the fall. Vaccination is still beneficial in December or later. Influenza is unpredictable and seasons can vary. Seasonal influenza

disease usually peaks in January or February most years, but disease can occur as late as May. The WOW Van will begin offering flu vaccine September, 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Is the “stomach flu” really the flu?**

No. Many people use the term “stomach flu” to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. While these symptoms of being “sick to your stomach” can sometimes be related to the flu (more common in children than adults) these problems are rarely the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease.

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2007, estimates of flu-related deaths in the United States range from a low of 3,000 people to a high of about 49,000 people. Each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from the flu, including an average of 20,000 children younger than 5 years of age.

The 2009-2010 flu seasons are an example of how unpredictable flu can be. That season followed the emergence of a new H1N1 influenza virus in the spring of 2009. This virus caused the first influenza pandemic (global outbreak of disease) in more than 40 years.

Vaccination remains the cornerstone of preventing influenza. It has a long and successful track record of safety and effectiveness in the United States. So protect yourself and the ones you love and get vaccinated.

For more information about the seriousness of influenza and the benefits of influenza vaccination, talk to your doctor, call us at Wright County Public Health or visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.

To make an appointment for your seasonal flu shot in the WOW Van  
Call 763-682-7717 or 1-800-362-3667, Ext.7717  
Or visit us at our web site at [www.co.wright.mn.us](http://www.co.wright.mn.us).  
For a schedule of our [WOW Van](#) locations and hours.