

Not Sure If You Can Get an Influenza Vaccine?

Updated recommendations may mean you can – even if you were told no in the past.

Influenza (“flu”) vaccination prevents thousands of deaths and millions of medical visits every year. But some people have been told they can’t be vaccinated when that might not be the case now. New vaccine options and updated recommendations mean that more people than ever can get the protection that the vaccine offers. The information below shows some of these reasons along with what is known that makes influenza vaccination a must for you!

If you...

Can you get an influenza vaccine?

Have an egg allergy



Yes. People with all kinds of egg allergies can get any influenza vaccine.

Had Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)



It depends. Influenza vaccines are a very rare cause of GBS. If your GBS symptoms began within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccination and no other cause was identified, we generally would not recommend influenza vaccine to you. However, if you are at high risk of severe illness or complications from the flu, your doctor may still recommend the vaccine. Most cases of GBS are completely unrelated to influenza vaccination. People whose GBS is not influenza vaccine-related can get the influenza vaccine.

Are pregnant or breastfeeding



Yes. Getting the influenza vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding is not only safe, it's recommended because it protects both mom and baby. The only type of influenza vaccine you should not get while pregnant is the live nasal spray vaccine. The live vaccine is fine if you are breastfeeding.

Had a severe allergic reaction after getting influenza vaccine in the past



It depends. If you had a severe allergic reaction the same day you got an influenza vaccine, you should not get that specific type of vaccine again. However, you might be able to get a different type of influenza vaccine. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your allergic reaction and if you could get an influenza vaccine.

Have a weakened immune system



Yes. Influenza vaccine is recommended for people with a weakened immune system because they are at higher risk of getting severe influenza illness. You can get any type recommended for your age except for the live nasal spray vaccine.

Have a loved one with cancer or weakened immune system



Yes. Getting the influenza vaccine protects both you and your loved one, even if their immune system is weakened. You can get any vaccine recommended for your age. It's even okay to get the live nasal spray vaccine as long as you wait 7 days to have close contact with a hospitalized patient in a special unit (such as a bone marrow transplant unit).

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Important influenza vaccine facts

FACT: You cannot get the flu from the flu shot.

For a virus to make you sick, it must be alive and strong. But the influenza vaccines contain either a killed virus, a virus so weakened that it cannot make you sick, or a non-infectious piece of the virus. These vaccines simply cannot cause the flu.

FACT: You should still get a flu shot even when it might not be a “good match” to the virus.

Influenza vaccines are more effective in some years than others, but they can still provide protection against severe illness even if some vaccinated people get the flu anyway.



FACT: Severe reactions to flu vaccines are extremely rare.

In the very rare event that a severe allergic reaction should occur, it typically happens within minutes to hours after vaccination. Vaccination providers are trained to keep emergency supplies on hand to respond and treat such a reaction.

FACT: You can get your flu and other vaccines at the same time.

The influenza vaccine only protects you from influenza. It may be a good idea (and convenient) for you to get other vaccines you need when you get your influenza vaccine. Ask your healthcare provider about other vaccines recommended for you.

Don't miss out on the protection the influenza vaccine offers. Talk to your doctor to see if you can protect yourself and those you love.

NOTE: This handout is a companion to *Talking with Your Patient about Contraindications and Precautions to Influenza Vaccination*, available at www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3125.pdf.