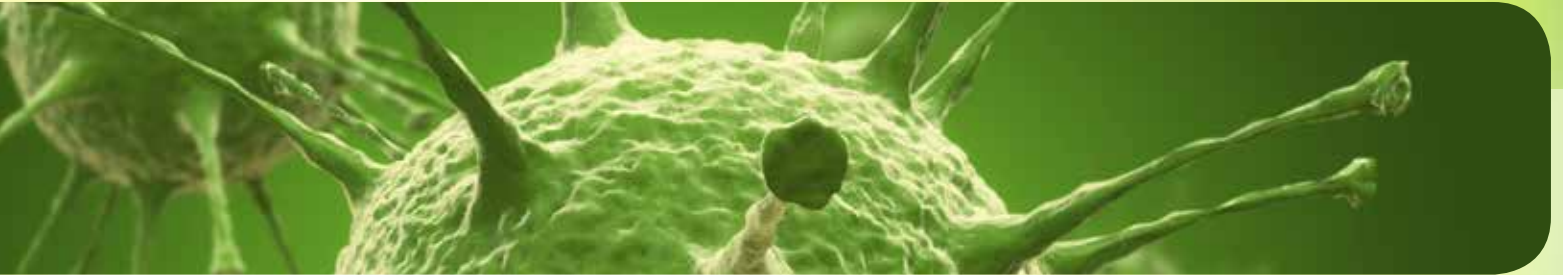


# Flu Shots

## General Information

*This information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is for Veterans and their families. This fact sheet answers some questions you may have about the flu shot.*



### Who should get a flu shot?

Everyone age 6 months and older is recommended to get a flu shot each year by VA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### Why should I get a flu shot?

- Getting a flu shot is the best way to slow the spread of flu from person to person.
- A flu shot can protect you and your family or friends against flu.
- Because of flu, thousands die and many more are hospitalized each year in the U.S.
- Anyone can get flu, but some people are at high risk for complications from flu:
  - people age 65 and older
  - people with health problems like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, and other chronic illnesses or conditions
  - pregnant women or people caring for an infant or a family member with health problems

### How well does the flu shot work?

Studies show that getting a flu shot can reduce illness and death from flu.

### When should I get a flu shot?

- **In the fall**, as soon as flu shots are available. A flu shot will protect you the entire flu season.
- Get a flu shot every year as flu viruses can change from year to year.

### Why do I need a flu shot every year?

- Flu viruses can change over time.
- Every year, the flu shot vaccine is updated to protect against the flu viruses most likely to spread that year.

### Can I get flu from a flu shot?

**No!** Only inactive (dead) flu virus is used to make flu shot vaccine, so **you cannot get flu from a flu shot.**



### Fast Facts: What is flu?

- Flu - short for influenza - is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.
- Flu spreads easily. It occurs every year, mainly during fall, winter, and spring.
- Flu is different from a cold. People with flu usually feel achy and have a fever.

## How does a flu shot protect me from flu?

- A flu shot helps your immune system build antibodies that fight flu viruses.
- Once you get a flu shot, it takes about 2 weeks for antibodies to protect you from flu.

## Can I still get flu after I get a flu shot?

### Maybe if:

- you are exposed to flu **before or right after you get a flu shot**, you could get flu before the shot takes effect
- the flu shot vaccine does not match all the flu viruses that are spreading
- flu viruses change after the flu shot is made (even so, you will still get some protection from the flu shot)
- you have an illness or weak immune system that causes your body to take longer to make antibodies
- your body fails to make antibodies after you get a flu shot



### Remember:

**You cannot get flu from a flu shot!  
Flu shots are safe and they work!**

## Is the flu shot safe?

**Yes.** Most people who get the flu shot do not have serious side effects or reactions to it.

- Some people may have redness or swelling on their arm where the shot was given.
- A very small number of people get minor body aches, a headache, or a low fever that lasts only a day or two.

## I am allergic to eggs. What should I do?

- If you have a **severe** allergy to chicken eggs, talk with your health care provider before getting the flu shot.
- Many people with egg allergies can still get a flu shot or other flu vaccine.

## What else can I do to slow the spread of flu?

- Stay home when sick.
- Clean your hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

[www.publichealth.va.gov/flu](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu)

[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)



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