



#54 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

Time to Get a Flu Shot!



Protect Yourself and Your Family

- Influenza (flu) is a highly contagious respiratory illness with fever, cough, muscle aches, and sore throat.
- Every year, more than 2,500 New Yorkers die of flu and pneumonia.
- A flu shot is just as important as any other life-saving medication.
- You need *this year's* flu shot for *this year's* flu. Last year's shot will NOT protect you now.
- Flu shots are available from October through June. The sooner you get one, the quicker you'll be protected.

Influenza can kill. Flu shots save lives.



• Available in Spanish, Chinese and other languages: call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health
 • Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/health
 • 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址 nyc.gov/health

Who Should Get a Flu Shot?

People at high risk for complications from the flu should always get a flu shot every year:

- People age 50 and older (especially those 65 and older).
- Children from age 6 months until their 5th birthday.
- People in nursing homes and other long-term-care facilities.
- Pregnant women.
- Persons with long-term health problems, such as:
 - Diabetes.
 - Lung disease, including asthma.
 - Heart disease.
 - Kidney disease.
 - Sickle cell anemia.
 - Weak immune system (e.g., from HIV or cancer treatment).
 - Seizure, neuromuscular, and other disorders that may cause breathing problems.
 - Children 18 and younger on long-term aspirin therapy.

To protect people at high risk, these people need flu shots, too:

- Caregivers and household members of infants younger than 6 months. (Babies this age can get the flu, but are too young for a flu shot.)
- All close contacts of high-risk people listed above, such as household members and persons who provide home care.
- All health care workers.

Anyone can get the flu. While the people listed above should ALWAYS get an annual shot, almost everyone else can benefit from a flu shot, too.

Are You a Health Care Worker?

Protect your patients, your family, and yourself – get a flu shot!



Influenza can kill. Flu shots save lives.

Flu Shots Are Safe — You Can't Get the Flu From a Flu Shot!

- The flu shot uses killed vaccine that can't give a person the flu.
- Flu shots, like other vaccines, sometimes cause soreness at the injection site. But serious reactions from flu shots are VERY rare.

While flu shots are safe for almost everybody, some people should NOT get flu shots:

- People with a severe allergy to eggs.
- People who ever had a severe reaction to



Where to Get a Flu Shot

- Get a flu shot from your family doctor or primary-care provider.
- Many employers offer free or low-cost flu shots.
- Flu shots are available at no cost at Health Department immunization clinics and at low or no cost at Health and Hospitals Corporation facilities.
- People 50 and older can get free flu shots at City senior centers.

To find out where to get a flu shot, visit nyc.gov/health/flu or call 311

A Nasal Spray Vaccine Is Also Available

- FluMist is a vaccine spray for healthy people ages 5 to 49.
- It is especially useful for health care workers, and for caregivers and household contacts of people at high risk for flu complications — especially people who care for infants younger than 6 months.
- Because FluMist uses live (not killed) vaccine, pregnant women, people with weakened immune systems, and those with long-term health problems should not take it.
- People who who have a severe allergy to eggs shouldn't take FluMist, either.
- Your doctor can tell you if FluMist is right for you.

Protect Against Pneumonia, Too

- Pneumococcal pneumonia is a serious disease.
- Everyone 65 and older should get a pneumococcal shot ONCE for life-long protection. Most people with weakened immune systems or long-term health problems should also get this shot.
- A single re-vaccination is recommended after 5 years for those with weakened immune systems and people over 65 who were vaccinated before age 65.

Regular Flu ... 'Bird Flu' ... Pandemic Flu: What's the Difference?

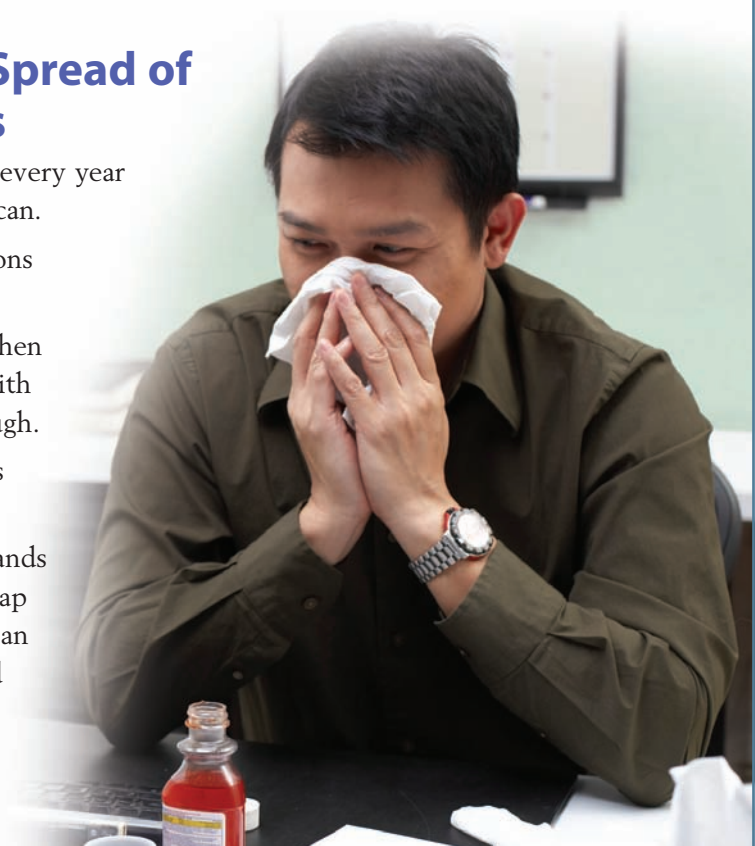
- **Regular (seasonal) flu** spreads person-to-person every winter and spring around the world. Flu shots prevent regular flu or make it much less severe.
- **Bird (avian) flu** is a different disease caused by a different flu virus. There is no vaccine against bird flu currently available. One type (H5N1) has killed a lot of birds overseas. Rarely, people in close contact with infected birds have gotten bird flu. H5N1 does not spread easily among people, and has not yet been found in people anywhere in the U.S. A different, mild strain of H5N1 has recently been found in birds in the U.S. but poses no risk to people.
- **Pandemic flu** is a global outbreak that occurs every few decades when a NEW flu strain starts spreading quickly from person-to-person. The last pandemic was in 1968.

While there is no threat of pandemic flu right now, New York and other cities have emergency plans in place to respond if a pandemic should ever occur.

For more information about the flu, visit nyc.gov/health/flu

Stop the Spread of Infections

- Get a flu shot every year as soon as you can.
- Reduce infections year-round:
 - Stay home when you're sick with fever and cough.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based solution.



**DIAL
311**

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Test Yourself

True or False?

1 Flu shots can't give you the flu.

True. Flu shots use killed vaccine.

YOU CAN'T GET THE FLU FROM A FLU SHOT!

2 Flu shots don't protect against colds.

True. Flu shots give very good protection against the flu. But they DON'T keep people from getting colds or other illnesses.

3 You can get a flu shot if you're sick.

True. It's okay to get a flu shot if you have a minor illness (like a cold or diarrhea).

If you are very sick with a fever, though, you should wait until you feel better to get a shot. (Ask your doctor if you are not sure what to do.)

4 You can get a flu shot and other vaccinations at the same time.

True. It's okay to get a flu shot along with other vaccinations (such as routine childhood immunizations or a pneumonia shot).

5 It's important to get a flu shot if you're pregnant.

True. Flu shots are recommended for pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy.

6 It's okay for a breast-feeding mother to get a flu shot.

True. Breast-feeding moms who get flu shots are protecting themselves AND their babies.

Infants younger than 6 months can get the flu, but they are too young for a flu shot. When the people around them get vaccinated, infants are much less likely to get the flu.

7 A flu shot can save your life.

True. People 65 and older who get a flu shot, for example, greatly reduce their risk of dying during flu season from *all* causes — not just the flu.

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Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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311**

For Non-Emergency NYC Services
Telephone Interpretation in 170 Languages