Protect Yourself from the Flu

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Avoid the Flu with a Vaccine

Protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu by getting a flu vaccine every year. The flu is a contagious respiratory illness. It can be mild or severe, and serious cases of the flu can lead to hospitalization or death.

We cover all flu vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for healthy adults and children six months or older. The flu virus changes every year, so it’s important to get an updated vaccine.

You can get the flu at any time during the year, but it’s most common between October and May. The peak flu season lasts from December to February.

Cold or Flu?

**Flu symptoms:**
- Fever of 102°–104°
- Lasts longer than three days
- Muscle aches
- Chills
- Severe coughing
- Extreme fatigue
- General weakness

**Cold symptoms:**
- Fever of 101° or less
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Nasal or chest congestion

Flu Vaccine FAQ

**Q: When should I get a flu vaccine?**
A: The CDC recommends that healthy adults get a flu vaccine before the end of October each year, but getting a flu vaccine later in the season is still beneficial for your health. You should always talk to your doctor before you get a flu vaccine or if you have questions about the flu.

**Q: Where can I get a flu vaccine?**
A: Flu vaccines are offered at many doctor’s offices, limited services and urgent care clinics, and pharmacies. Even if you don’t have a doctor or nurse you see regularly, you can get a flu vaccine.

If you’re a Blue Cross member, you should visit a participating or preferred provider or pharmacy to get a no-cost flu vaccine. If you don’t have pharmacy benefits through Blue Cross, check your plan information to see where you can get a flu vaccine that’s covered.

**Q: Will a flu vaccine make me sick?**
A: You won’t catch the flu from a flu vaccine. Some people have a mild reaction to the flu shot, like redness or soreness in the area where they receive the shot.
Q: Can I get a flu vaccine and still get the flu?
A: Yes, it’s possible to get the flu even if you get a flu vaccine. However, studies show a flu vaccine can reduce an individual’s risk of getting the flu by 40% to 60%.³

Q: Who should get a flu vaccine?
A: In general, anyone six months and older should get a flu vaccine. The following people have a higher risk of developing flu complications, so it’s especially important that they get the flu vaccine every year:
- Children six months to five years old
- Adults 50 years and older
- Adults and children with compromised immune systems or chronic heart, lung, or blood disorders; asthma; hypertension; or diabetes
- Children and teens (six months to 18 years old) who are on a long-term aspirin therapy or who might be at risk for experiencing Reye’s syndrome
- Adults and children living in a nursing home or care facility
- Pregnant women and new moms within the first two weeks after giving birth
- Adults and children of American Indian and Alaskan Native descent
- Adults or children who are considered overweight (adults with a body mass index of 40 or higher)

Q: Should I talk to my doctor before getting a flu vaccine?
A: Yes, it’s important to talk to your doctor before you get a flu vaccine, especially if you have:
- A fever
- A severe egg allergy
- A past allergic reaction to a flu vaccine
- A history of developing Guillain-Barre syndrome after getting a flu vaccine

Q: How often should I get a flu vaccine?
A: The CDC recommends healthy adults get a flu vaccine every year, since the virus can change. Some children six months to eight years old may need two doses of a flu vaccine.⁴ Since the second dose should be given four weeks after the first dose, these children should get their first dose as early as possible to ensure the second dose is received prior to the end of October, but getting a flu vaccine later in the season is still beneficial for flu prevention.

Need Help?
Call our 24/7 Nurse Care Line at 1-888-247-BLUE (2583) to talk to a registered nurse, at no additional cost. They’ll guide you through your next steps for care.

1. cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccinations.htm
2, 3. cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm
4. cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/children.htm
What to Do If You Get the Flu:

• Call your doctor to talk about care options, especially if you have a high risk of flu complications or are very sick. Your doctor may want to treat you over the phone so that you can stay home and avoid contact with others.

• Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. If you don’t have soap and water, use hand sanitizer that contains alcohol.

• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you can, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow to avoid spreading germs.

• Clean commonly used surfaces and items that may be contaminated with flu germs.

• Before returning to work or other activities, make sure you’re fever-free for at least 24 hours.

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For more information about the flu, visit bluecrossma.com/flu.