



## What You Need to Know: Flu Vaccines for Adults

**T**he flu (also known as influenza) is a contagious disease that can be mild to serious, even deadly. The best protection against flu? Get a flu shot every year. Many different flu viruses can spread through our communities, and they change all the time. That's why flu shots are updated every year to protect you against the flu viruses that are likely to be most common.

### Getting a flu shot has many benefits:

- You are less likely to get the flu
- If you do get the flu, you are less likely to get seriously sick or to be hospitalized
- The vaccine protects people around you from getting the flu

### It is especially important to get a shot if you are at high risk for having serious flu-related problems:

- People aged 65 and older
- Nursing home residents
- People with serious health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, lung disease, or HIV

**It's best to get your shot in the fall before flu season begins.** If you did not get vaccinated in the fall, you can—and should—get a flu shot at any time of year.

People who care for older adults should also get a flu shot every year.

Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent, Fluad Quadrivalent or Flublok Quadrivalent are recommended over other influenza vaccines for persons 65 years or older. If none of these three vaccines are available, standard dose influenza vaccines may be used.

Do not get a flu shot if you have had allergic reactions to flu shots in the past or were diagnosed with Guillian-Barre Syndrome within 6 weeks of having a previous flu shot.

Medicare covers the cost of flu shots. Medicaid and private health insurance plans also cover costs.



## Background

**Flu** is a serious disease—it is not the common cold. The flu can cause a fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, and fatigue that can last a week or longer.

**Each year, flu causes 40,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations in the US.** Because our immune systems weaken with age, people aged 65 and older can have more serious flu-related illness than younger people. In recent flu seasons, about 70 to 90 percent of flu-related deaths occurred among older adults.

During seasons when flu vaccines closely “match” circulating flu viruses, flu vaccines can reduce your risk for needing to see a doctor for flu treatment by [40 percent to 60 percent](#).

Flu vaccination prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related doctor’s visits each year. For example, during 2019-2020, flu vaccination prevented about:

- 7.5 million cases of flu
- 3.7 million flu-associated medical visits
- 105,000 flu-associated hospitalizations
- 6,300 flu-associated deaths



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**The AGS Health in Aging Foundation is dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of all older people. We aim to empower older adults and caregivers to actively participate in their health care and decision-making.**

*DISCLAIMER:* This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other healthcare provider. Always consult your healthcare provider about your medications, symptoms, and health problems. July 2022

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