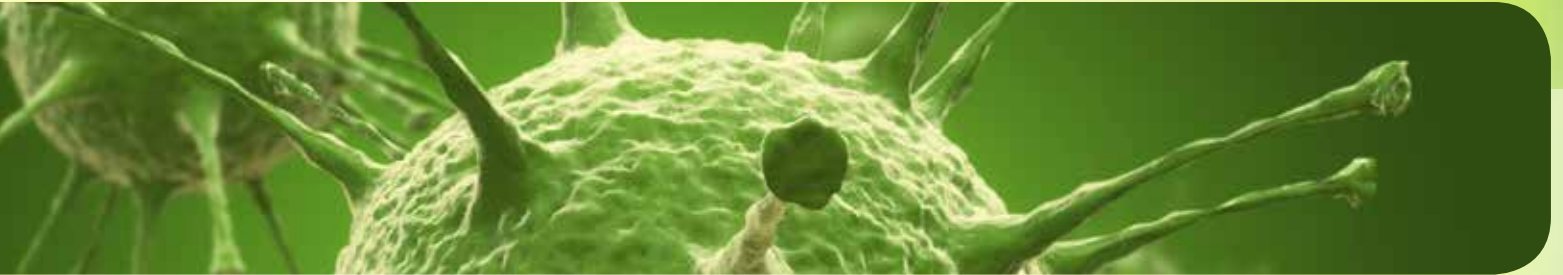


Flu Shots

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

www.cdc.gov/flu

www.flu.gov



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Public Health (10P3)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
publichealth@va.gov

March 2014 | FLU FS-1

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Public Health

This material is NOT copyrighted and may be reproduced

www.publichealth.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn