



Some things deserve more time and attention.  
*We believe your health is one of them.*

## 2021 Flu Vaccination Information Update

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### What is influenza?

The flu (also called influenza) is a very contagious infection of the airways which spreads easily from person to person.

**It is especially serious for babies, people over 65 years and pregnant women.**

Compared with other viral respiratory infections (such as the common cold), the flu can cause severe illness and, in some cases, life-threatening complications or even death.

The flu infects many parts of the body, including the nose, throat and lungs. Symptoms can include fevers, sore throat, cough, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, runny nose and watery eyes. The fevers and body aches usually last for 3-5 days, but coughing and fatigue can often persist for 2-3 weeks.

### Who should get a flu shot?

We strongly recommend the flu vaccination for everyone aged 6 months and over.

**Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect you, your family and your community from serious disease caused by the flu.**

### COVID-19 and the 2021 Influenza Vaccine

Due to the current pandemic the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak is ever present. For this reason it is strongly advised that all people over 6 months have the regular seasonal influenza vaccine in 2021 AND a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you become eligible. **IMPORTANT** - you should not receive COVID-19 vaccine within 14 days either side of your 2021 influenza vaccine.

### What are the benefits of getting vaccinated?

There are lots of benefits associated with getting a flu vaccine each year. Not only do you reduce your own risk of becoming infected with influenza, but you also help protect other people in the community who are at greater risk of getting seriously ill from the flu. This includes more vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with chronic health conditions and young

children (especially infants younger than 6 months who are too young to get vaccinated).

The more people who are vaccinated in our community, the less likely the disease will spread. Flu vaccinations may also reduce the severity of your illness and can lessen the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalisation or death.

### Can the vaccine stop me from getting the flu and how effective is it?

Unfortunately the flu vaccine doesn't provide complete protection against influenza. But it does provide a good level of protection, which is 70% - 90% effective in healthy adults.

**It's important to know that it takes around two weeks for a person to develop protection against the flu following their vaccination. During this time, there is still a risk of contracting the flu if you come in contact with an infected person before your body mounts an immune response.**

It's also worth noting that the flu vaccine does not protect against all strains of the flu or other respiratory illnesses caused by viruses, such as the common cold.

### Can I catch influenza from the vaccine?

No. It is not possible to catch influenza from having the vaccine, as it contains only inactivated virus particles. Because the virus in the vaccine is not live, it cannot spread through your respiratory system or cause illness like the real virus. The mild symptoms some people get after vaccination are usually related to the vaccine generating an immune response. This is how vaccines work — they train your immune system to recognise parts of the influenza virus, so it can respond when it encounters the real thing.

### Do I need to get vaccinated against the flu every year?

The short answer is yes.

There are two main reasons for getting a yearly flu vaccine:

1. Flu viruses change frequently and flu vaccines are updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and common circulating strains.
2. A person's immune protection from influenza vaccination wanes over time.

