

# CDC Influenza E-brief

2008-09 Flu Facts for Policy Makers

September 2008 Issue

Shading corresponds to the influenza season and burden of disease in the northern hemisphere.

## September

- Sept 17-20: [WHO Vaccine Strain Selection for Southern Hemisphere](#)
- 16-17: [National Vaccine Advisory Com. Mtg](#)
- 24: National Foundation for Infectious Diseases Press Event to Kick off Flu Season
- 21-27: [National Adult Immunization Awareness Week](#)

## October

- 22-23: [Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices](#)

## November

## December

- 8-14: [National Influenza Vaccination Week](#) (scheduled)

## January

- Vaccine strain growth by manufacturers based upon their assessment of which strains will be chosen

## February

- [WHO Vaccine Strain Selection for Northern Hemisphere](#)
- [FDA Vaccine Strain Selection for the US](#)
- 5-6: [National Vaccine Advisory Committee Meeting](#)
- 25-26: [Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices](#)

## March

- 30-April 2: [National Immunization Conference](#)

## April

- 25 - May 2: [National Infant Immunization Week](#)

## May

## June

- 2-3: [National Vaccine Advisory Committee Meeting](#)
- 24-25: [Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices](#)

## July

## August

- [National Immunization Awareness Month](#)

**“Flu season can start as early as October or last as late as May. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.”**

During the 2007-2008 influenza season, every U.S. state experienced widespread influenza disease. On average, flu causes 36,000 deaths and over 200,000 hospitalizations each year. Most deaths occur in the elderly; however, even young children can be affected. During the last influenza season, 83 deaths of children from influenza complications were reported to CDC. Flu and its severe complications are potentially preventable through vaccination, but many Americans do not take advantage of this simple, safe, and effective prevention measure. CDC is our nation’s leader for developing strategies to prevent and control flu, and below are some helpful facts for the upcoming season.

## What is Seasonal Influenza (Also Called “Flu” or “Human Influenza”)

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.



Seasonal flu vaccine takes approximately 6-9 months to develop.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population gets infected with influenza virus;
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications;
- 36,000 people die from flu.



Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications.

## When to Get Vaccinated

**Y**early flu vaccination should begin in September or as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and beyond. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later. It takes 2 weeks after vaccination for your body to make protective antibodies to protect you from the flu.

### Vaccine Projections for 2008-2009 Flu Season

Vaccine manufacturers project producing as many as 143-146 million doses of influenza vaccine for the 2008-2009 U.S. influenza season. Distribution began during August.

## Who Should Get Vaccinated

**I**n general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, certain people should get vaccinated each year either because they are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for high risk persons. The 2008-2009 influenza season marks the first season where all healthy children ages 6 months up to their 19th birthday are recommended to get the vaccine. **With this expanded recommendation, 261 million people in the United States (84.5% of the population) are now recommended to get an annual flu vaccine.**



Cover your nose or mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

People who should get vaccinated each year are:

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
2. Pregnant women
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - Health care workers
  - Household contacts of persons at higher risk for complications from the flu (e.g., persons 50 years or older, younger than 5 years, or persons of any age who have a chronic medical condition)
  - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated, but are the pediatric group at highest risk of influenza complications)

### Helpful Links:

[Lung Association flu vaccine finder](#)  
[CDC's Seasonal Influenza Information](#)  
[Find your state's Health Department's website](#)  
[National Preparedness Month 2008](#)