



FACT SHEET

Vaccination Information for Health Care Workers

Influenza (Flu)

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.

Every year in the United States, on average:

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

Some people are at high risk for serious flu complications, such as older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions.

Spread of Flu

The flu is thought to spread mainly in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing, but may also be spread by touching objects with influenza virus on it and then touching ones nose, mouth or eyes.

Adults can shed virus 1 day **before** getting symptoms and up to 5 days **after** getting sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

Did You Know?

- Droplets from a sneeze or cough can travel 3 feet or more.
- You can shed flu virus a day before you feel sick.
- You cannot get the flu from a flu shot.
- All health care workers should get vaccinated every year
- Only 45.3% of U.S. health care workers get vaccinated.
- CDC recommends the flu shot for pregnant women, a group at high risk of influenza complications.

Vaccination for Health Care Workers

- Health care workers and people working in health care settings should get a flu vaccine each year.
- This is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Infectious Disease Society of America, The National Foundation for Infectious Disease, American College of Physicians and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.
- Vaccinating health care workers protects them from getting sick and prevents them from giving influenza to their patients, their families and other contacts.

Which Vaccine Should You Take?

There are two types of flu vaccine: the "flu shot" - a vaccine with killed virus given by needle injection - and the nasal-spray vaccine (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine or LAIV) - a vaccine with weakened live viruses.

- **The flu shot** is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.
- **LAIV** is approved for use in healthy people 2 years to 49 years of age. But because of a theoretical risk of passing the weakened live virus in LAIV to patients with severely weakened immune systems (for example, people with hematopoietic stem cell transplants), **the flu shot is preferred for vaccinating health care workers in close contact with severely immunocompromised patients when that patient is being cared for in a protective environment.** These health care workers may still get LAIV, but they must avoid contact with such patients for 7 days after getting vaccinated.

Influenza (Flu)

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu, or call the National Immunization Hotline at (800) 232-2522 (English), (800) 232-0233 (español), or (800) 243-7889 (TTY).