

Audience: People with Asthma  
CDC: 2011-2012 Flu Season  
Word Count: 398

## Got Asthma? Get a Flu Shot!

If you have asthma, you're probably familiar with the wheezing, breathlessness and coughing that comes with it. But did you know that the flu can make your asthma worse, and that having asthma puts you at higher risk for serious flu complications? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), even if your asthma is controlled by medicine, getting the flu can make your asthma worse. It can even land you in the hospital. During the 2010-2011 flu season, 19 percent of people hospitalized from flu-related causes had asthma.

CDC recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and best way to protect against the flu. But there is a special message for people who have certain health conditions like asthma. "People with underlying conditions like asthma are at special risk and it's important that they be protected from the flu this and every season," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, Director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. The annual flu vaccine recommendation is the same during years, like this one, when the vaccine is made to protect against the same flu strains as the previous season's vaccine. "You need to get this season's vaccine for optimal protection against flu this season," says Schuchat.

The flu vaccine is safe and cannot give you the flu. The flu shot rather than the nasal spray is suggested for people with asthma or other medical conditions.

Flu vaccines are offered in many convenient locations. For example, you can get them from your doctor or pharmacist, at local health clinics, and at flu clinics at local retail outlets.

While flu symptoms and severity can vary, the flu is typically worse than the common cold. Symptoms, and can include fever, headache, tiredness, cough and muscle aches. Vomiting and diarrhea also can occur, although this is more common in children.

A flu vaccine is the first and best way to prevent influenza. For people with a high risk condition who do get the flu, however, there are influenza antiviral drugs to treat the flu. "Antiviral drugs are not a substitute for vaccination, but rather a second line of defense against the flu," Schuchat says. People with asthma who develop flu-like symptoms should call their doctor.

For more information, visit <http://www.flu.gov>, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>, or contact CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

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