

Audience: Young Adults (19–24 years)

CDC 2013-2014 Flu Season

Word Count: 685

Don't Wait – Vaccinate

Stress about school, work, roommates or even your social life can really bring you down. And so can a serious illness, like the flu. The flu is unpredictable, and can affect us when we least expect it. A bout with flu could cause you to miss work or school, or result in something far worse—like a trip to the ER, hospitalization, and, in some cases, even death.

Anyone—even young, healthy adults—can get sick from flu. Flu spreads easily between people; if you have the flu, you can spread the virus to people around you even before you have any symptoms. Certain long-term medical conditions, like asthma or diabetes (types 1 and 2), can increase your chances of having complications related to flu, even if these conditions are well-managed. Adults 65 years and older and pregnant people are also at higher risk for complications from flu. Flu complications can include pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections. The flu can also make chronic health problems worse.

Luckily, protecting yourself from flu is easy. The first and most important step is getting a flu vaccine. Annual flu vaccination is recommended for [almost everyone](#) 6 months of age and older, and is especially important for those at high risk for flu complications. Even if you were vaccinated against the flu last season, you still need a flu vaccine *this season* because immunity from vaccination declines over time.

You have several options when it comes to the type of vaccine to get and where to get it.

A regular flu shot is approved for most people 6 months and older. The intradermal flu shot—which is injected into the skin instead of the muscle using a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot—is approved for people 18 to 64 years of age. The nasal spray vaccine is approved for use in *healthy people aged 2 through 49 who are not pregnant. Talk to a doctor or nurse about which option is best for you.

You may think you can't find time to get a flu vaccine, but getting vaccinated is now more convenient than ever. Many pharmacies, drugstores, and supermarkets offer walk-in clinics that are usually no-hassle and have convenient hours. If you're in school, many university clinics offer students flu vaccines for free or at a reduced price. When more people get vaccinated against the flu, they are taking the most important step in protecting themselves and their loved ones from flu.

Contrary to popular belief, the flu vaccine does not cause the flu. Some people experience mild flu-like symptoms after vaccination, which can mean that your body is responding to the vaccine. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that provide protection against the flu. If you do get the flu soon after vaccination, you may have been exposed to flu viruses either before

getting vaccinated or during the two weeks it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated. Also, it is possible that your symptoms are not caused by flu. Other respiratory viruses, like rhinovirus (common cold), and some bacteria can cause symptoms similar to those caused by flu.

The few minutes it will take you to get a flu vaccine can help prevent missed days from work or school due to being sick with the flu. It's good practice to get vaccinated soon after vaccine becomes available, ideally by October, to ensure you are protected by the time flu begins to spread in your community. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, getting vaccinated later can be beneficial even in January or later.

By protecting yourself, you'll also help protect your family, friends, classmates, and coworkers.

Starting in October, more Americans, even those with preexisting conditions, will qualify for health insurance coverage that fits their budget and needs. It includes many free screenings, vaccinations, and counseling. Visit www.HealthCare.gov or call 1-800-318-2596 to learn more. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

(*"Healthy" indicates persons who do not have an underlying medical condition that predisposes them to influenza complications.)

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