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It's not too late to vaccinate – Get your flu vaccine today!

This fall, when you see signs reading “Get Your Flu Vaccine,” you might ask “Isn't it too late to get vaccinated?” No, it's not too late! CDC recommends that flu vaccination efforts continue throughout the flu season. While the sooner you get vaccinated the more likely you are to be protected against the flu when activity picks up in your community, vaccination into December and beyond can be beneficial during most flu seasons. View [CDC's influenza summary map](#) for a weekly update on flu activity in the United States.

“Flu season most often peaks between December and March, but activity can occur as late as May,” says Dr. Dan Jernigan, Director of the Influenza Division at CDC. “We are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated this season to get vaccinated now.” It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, so it's best to get vaccinated early.

For millions of people every season, the flu means a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue, and miserable days spent in bed. Millions of people get sick, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands to tens of thousands of people die from flu each year.

There is a vaccine that can help prevent flu. While the vaccine varies in how well it works, there are many studies that show that flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctor visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. CDC estimates that last season, flu vaccine prevented 5.1 million cases of flu, 2.5 million flu-related medical visits and 71,000 flu-associated hospitalizations. However, only about half of the people in the United States reported getting a flu vaccine last season; leaving millions of people unprotected. If just 5% more of the population had gotten vaccinated last season, an additional 504,000 illnesses, 233,000 doctor's visits and 6,000 hospitalizations would have been prevented.

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal flu viruses. This season, CDC recommends the use of injectable flu vaccines (flu shots) and not the nasal spray flu vaccine. The nasal spray flu vaccine (live attenuated influenza vaccine or LAIV) is not recommended for use this season because of concerns about effectiveness.

“We are looking into the situation with the hopes that the nasal spray flu vaccine will once again be an option for some people,” says Dr. Jernigan. “In the meantime, this flu season, CDC recommends the flu shot and not the nasal spray flu vaccine.” Flu shots work and can keep you from getting sick!

The 2016-2017 U.S. flu vaccines have been updated for this season. To learn more about the vaccine options available this season, visit [Key Facts about Seasonal Flu Vaccine](#).

Some people are at high risk for serious flu-related complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death. People at high risk include [pregnant women](#), [children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old](#), [people 65 year of age and older](#), and people who have certain medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

For those at high risk of serious flu complications, getting a flu vaccine is especially important. It's also important to get the vaccine if you care for anyone at high risk, including children younger than 6 months who are too

young to get a flu vaccine. To learn more about high risk conditions, visit [People at High Risk of Developing Flu–Related Complications](#).

Some children 6 months through 8 years of age will require two doses of flu vaccine for adequate protection from flu. Children in this age group who are getting vaccinated for the first time will need two doses of flu vaccine, spaced at least 28 days apart. Some children who have received flu vaccine previously also may need two doses. Your child's doctor or other health care professional can tell you if your child needs two doses.

“Getting the flu vaccine is simple, and it's the most important thing you can do to protect yourself and your family from the flu,” says Dr. Jernigan. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years, and there has been extensive research supporting the safety of seasonal flu vaccines.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, health departments, pharmacies, health centers, and travel clinics, as well as by many employers and schools. So, next time you see a sign that says, “Get Your Flu Vaccine Here,” stop in and get one, and encourage your friends and family to do the same. Use the HealthMap Vaccine Finder at <http://vaccine.healthmap.org> to find the nearest location where you and your family can get vaccinated.

For more information about the seriousness of the flu and the benefits of flu vaccination, talk to your doctor or other health care professional, visit www.cdc.gov/flu, or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.