



Flu Vaccine for Preteens and Teens

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Why does my child need the flu vaccine?

The flu is an illness that infects the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Flu spreads when infected people cough or sneeze. Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and in some cases it can cause death. While most preteens and teens who get sick with the flu recover within a couple of weeks, some will get complications like sinus infections, or pneumonia (a serious lung infection). Preteens and teens who have chronic health problems like diabetes (type 1 and 2) or asthma, are at a greater risk for complications from the flu, but even healthy adolescents can get very sick from the flu. The flu usually causes a cough, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, fatigue (tiredness) and sometimes fever. Flu spreads easily when sick people cough, sneeze, or talk.

When should my child be vaccinated?

Preteens and teens should get the flu vaccine every year, ideally by October. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue throughout the flu season, even in January or later. Flu vaccine is available at your child's doctor's office or clinic, and sometimes other places like the local health department, pharmacies, urgent care clinics, grocery stores, and schools. You can find a flu vaccination clinic near you with the vaccine finder at <http://vaccine.healthmap.org>.

What else should I know about the flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines can be given to preteens and teens in two ways:

- **Most flu shots** are made from killed flu viruses. This vaccine is a shot that is given in the arm.
- **The nasal spray flu vaccine** is made with live, but weakened, flu virus. This vaccine is sprayed up the nose. Preteens and teens with chronic health conditions, like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease should **NOT** get the nasal spray vaccine and instead get the flu shot.

Talk to your child's doctor or nurse about which flu vaccine is best for your preteen or teen.

Both types of flu vaccine have been studied carefully and are safe. They cannot cause the flu. The annual flu vaccine is recommended for preteens and teens by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine.

Both flu vaccines can sometimes cause mild, flu-like symptoms. The most common side effects from a flu shot are a sore arm and a low fever or achiness. The nasal spray flu vaccine might cause congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or cough. These mild effects usually go away a day or two after vaccination. Serious side effects from either type of flu vaccine are rare. It is very important to tell the doctor or nurse if your preteen or teen has a severe allergy to chicken eggs.

How can I get help paying for these vaccines?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines for children ages 18 years and younger, who are uninsured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native. You can find out more about the VFC program by visiting www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html or typing VFC in the search box of the CDC homepage (www.cdc.gov).

Where can I learn more?

Talk to your child's doctor or nurse to learn more about the flu vaccine and any other vaccines your preteen or teen needs. There is more information about these vaccines on CDC's Vaccines for Preteens and Teens website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens.

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