CVEEP

Flu 101: What to Know and How to Protect Yourself

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease that can cause serious illness, even in otherwise healthy people, especially during fall and winter when people spend more time indoors and respiratory viruses spread more easily.

Anyone can get the flu and spread it to others. That is why staying up to date on flu vaccination is an important step to help protect against severe illness.

How the Flu Affects the Body:

Flu affects the respiratory system (nose, throat, and lungs). Symptoms can come on suddenly and feel worse than a typical cold.[1] These symptoms may include:

- Fever/feeling feverish or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue (tiredness)

Flu can also lead to serious complications, including pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic health conditions such as asthma, COPD, heart disease, and diabetes.

Flu Vaccine Recommendations:

Flu vaccines are recommended for people 6 months and older, including pregnant women, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and leading medical societies. For people ages 65 and older, high-dose and adjuvanted flu vaccines are preferentially recommended because they are designed to create a stronger immune response.

For complete flu vaccine recommendations for children, adults, and during pregnancy, please visit:

- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
- American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (ACOG)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)

Flu Vaccine Coverage:

Flu vaccination does not require a prescription and healthcare providers (e.g., doctors, nurses, pharmacists) can help answer questions. Flu vaccines should be available at local pharmacies but call ahead to make sure they are available. A healthcare provider can help determine which flu vaccine is right for you based on your age, health history, and risk factors.

Flu vaccines are covered at no cost by public (Medicaid, Medicare, TRICARE, and the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program) and private insurance, including employer-sponsored insurance.

Flu Antiviral Treatments:

For individuals at higher risk of severe illness, flu antiviral treatments are also available with a prescription from your healthcare provider. These treatments help lessen the severity of symptoms and shorten the duration of illness. Treatments should be started quickly within 2 days after the first symptoms appear.[2]

The Importance of Vaccination:

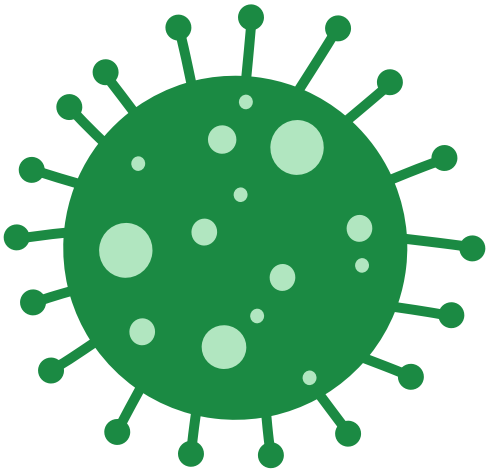
Flu vaccination can help reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and other serious complications. Each year, flu vaccines are updated to protect against the strains most likely to spread. Even if the vaccination does not prevent flu completely, it can still help make illness milder.

This protection is especially important because flu can affect people of all ages in different ways. Children get sick with flu at higher rates, while older adults are more likely to become seriously ill if they get the flu.[3,4] During the 2024-2025 respiratory season, flu led to an estimated 770,000 hospitalizations.[5]

CVEEP Vaccine Locator Tool

For more information about flu vaccines and the latest recommendations – as well as antiviral treatments, visit CVEEP.org.

To find a vaccination location near you, visit CVEEP's Vaccine Locator.



VACCINATION IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO HELP PROTECT AGAINST SERIOUS FLU-RELATED OUTCOMES.

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/flu/signs-symptoms/index.html
[2] https://cveep.org/treatments/guidelines-recommendations/
[3] https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html
[4] https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm
[5] https://www.cdc.gov/acip/downloads/slides-2025-06-25-26/03-dugan-influenza-508.pdf