

## **What You Need to Know about Flu**

1. While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications from the flu, causing hospitalization or even death, such as:
  - a. older people,
  - b. young children
  - c. people with chronic lung disease (such as asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions, and certain other long-term health conditions, and
  - d. pregnant women
  
2. Flu viruses are constantly changing. Each flu season, different flu viruses can spread, and they can affect people differently based on their body's ability to fight infection. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to family and friends. The first and most important step in protecting against the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season
  
3. The 2009-2010 flu season is an example of how unpredictable flu can be. The 2009 H1N1 virus that caused a lot of illness was more serious for younger people than seasonal flu usually is.
  
4. Everyone 6 months of age and older is recommended to be vaccinated against influenza.
  
5. Children younger than 5 years old, and especially those younger than 2 years, are at higher risk of serious flu complications, including hospitalization and death, compared to older children. The risk of serious illness is highest among children younger than 6 months of age.

6. Vaccination is especially important for protecting children with asthma, diabetes (type 1 and 2), or other long-term health conditions because they are at increased risk for serious complications from flu.

## **What You Need to Know about Flu Vaccine**

The 2011-2012 flu vaccine will protect against:

- an influenza A H3N2 virus,
- an influenza B virus, and
- the 2009 H1N1 virus.

Over the last 50 years, flu vaccines have been shown to be safe. Every year, CDC works closely with FDA, health care providers, state and local health departments, and other partners to ensure the highest safety standards for flu vaccines. CDC also works closely with FDA to ensure systems are in place to promptly detect unexpected health problems following vaccination.

The flu vaccine comes in two forms: injectable (shot) and intranasal (nose spray).

The flu shot (also called inactivated influenza vaccine) cannot give you the flu. It is comprised of killed viruses. Most people generally do not experience any side effects from the flu shot. When they do occur, they are usually mild. The most common side effects from the flu shot, including the shot made to protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus last season, are soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot is given.

The nasal spray flu vaccine can protect healthy people ages 2 through 49 years from the flu. The nasal spray vaccine cannot give you the flu. It is made from weakened flu viruses that can only infect the nasal passages. Most people don't have any side effects. When side effects do occur they tend to be mild, for example runny nose, cough, or nasal congestion. The nasal spray should not be given to pregnant women or persons with chronic medical conditions including asthma or children 2-4 years old with a history of wheezing.

The flu virus is easily spread through coughs and sneezes and by touching something with the virus on it and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. That's why good health habits are also important including:

- Staying home when you're sick
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick
- Coughing or sneezing into your elbow and not your hand
- Washing your hands often with soap and water
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keeping work and study surfaces clean