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What is the flu?

Flu is a very contagious disease that spreads through droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk and others breathe in these droplets or touch surfaces where the droplets landed.

What are the symptoms and effects of the flu?

Flu symptoms include fever/chills, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, and runny or stuffy nose. People who catch the flu may pass it to others from 1 day before falling ill to 5-7 days after getting sick.

Healthy adults and children can easily get sick from the flu. Every year, the flu affects thousands of people and some are hospitalized and die.

How do I keep from getting the flu?

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

Why do I have to have a flu vaccine every year?

The viruses that are most likely to affect people each flu season change from year to year.

What types of vaccines are available?

There are two types of vaccines:

- The “flu shot” is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) given with a needle, usually in the arm. It is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people, people

with chronic medical conditions, as well as pregnant women.

- The nasal-spray flu vaccine is a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses given as a nasal spray (sometimes called LAIV for “Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine”). The viruses in the nasal spray vaccine do not cause the flu. LAIV is indicated for healthy nonpregnant persons, 2 through 49 years of age.

Can pregnant women get the flu vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend routine immunization of pregnant women with the flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.

How long do I have to wait to be protected against the flu after I get the vaccine?

Your body develops antibodies in response to the flu vaccine. About 2 weeks after the vaccination, these antibodies increase in number to provide protection against the flu viruses.

In addition to getting the vaccine what can I do to keep from getting the flu?

In addition to the vaccine, do the following:

- Cover your cough
- Wash your hands often
- Try not to touch your eyes, mouth, and nose too frequently
- Stay away from those who are sick
- Stay home if you are sick
- If you do get sick, take anti-viral drugs if your doctor prescribes them

How safe is the vaccine?

The flu vaccine is both safe and effective. The flu vaccine does not cause the flu. There are certain people who should not get the flu vaccine, such as individuals who:

- Are allergic to chicken eggs
- Have had severe reactions to a flu shot in the past
- Have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot
- Are younger than 6 months of age
- Are sick with a fever

When should I get the vaccine?

Vaccine effectiveness is how well the flu vaccines work to prevent influenza illness. It can vary from year to year and among age and risk groups. In general, the flu vaccine works best (up to 90%) among young, healthy adults and older children. Among the elderly, it helps prevent complications and death from the flu.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

The best place to get the flu vaccine is at your health-care provider’s office or clinic. You can also get it at your community pharmacy or at other community vaccinators. To find the closest place to get a flu vaccine, visit TexasFlu.org and click on the Flu Vaccine Finder button.

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