Is the flu vaccine safe?

Yes, the flu vaccine is safe. Flu vaccine can be given with other vaccines.

Thimerosal

Some inactivated flu vaccine contains thimerosal, a form of mercury, as a preservative. Some contains only a trace of thimerosal. There is no scientific evidence that thimerosal in vaccines is harmful, and the known benefits of the vaccine outweigh any potential risk from thimerosal. If you have questions about thimerosal-reduced or thimerosal-free flu vaccine, ask your doctor.

How to know if you have the flu

The flu is more severe than a cold. Influenza usually comes on suddenly, lasts for several days, and includes some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches

Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who are having any of these symptoms.

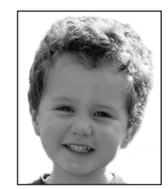
The myth of the stomach flu

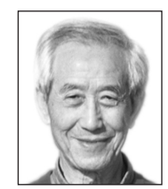
Some people mistakenly call illnesses with nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea "flu," or "stomach flu." These symptoms can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria, or even parasites. Influenza (the flu) is a respiratory disease.

Influenza is caused by a virus, so antibiotics (like penicillin) don't work to cure it. The best way to prevent the flu is to get the flu vaccine every fall.

For more facts, call your doctor, your local health department or

1-888-76-SHOTS





Related websites:

www.cdc.gov/flu
www.michigan.gov/flu
www.michigan.gov/immunize
www.vaccineinfo.org

Michigan Department of Community Health
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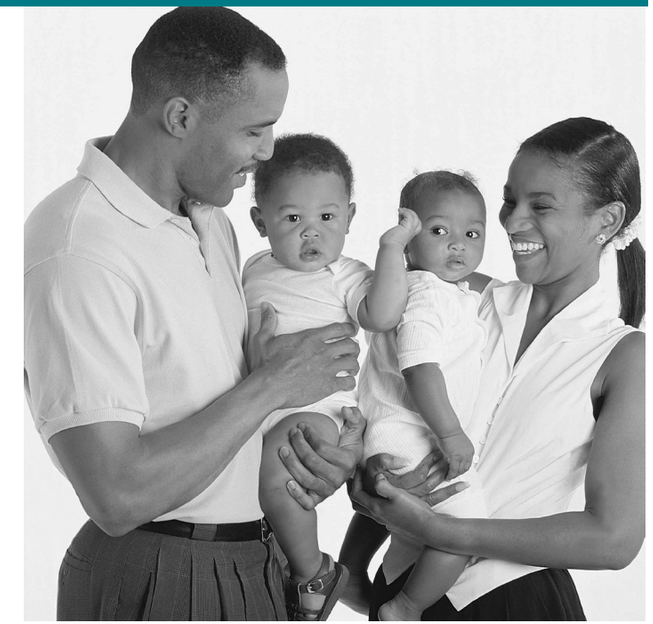
FLU AND YOUR FAMILY



Keep Your Family **Safe** from the **Flu**

- Get the flu vaccine for yourself.
- Get the flu vaccine for your child.
- Get the flu vaccine for those around you.

How do people get the flu?

Influenza (flu) is caused by a virus that infects the nose, throat, and lungs. When an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, he or she can spread the flu to other people. It is spread person to person in this way.

Who should get the flu vaccine every year?

Persons at increased risk for influenza:

- children 6 months through 18 years of age
- persons 65 years and older
- pregnant women
- people living in nursing homes
- people living in long-term care facilities, like group homes
- children 6 months to 18 years old who take aspirin every day
- persons 6 months old and older with ongoing health problems, such as:
  - asthma or other lung diseases
  - diabetes
  - kidney diseases
  - heart disease
  - HIV/AIDS
  - sickle cell anemia
  - immune system problems
  - nerve and muscle problems that make it hard to breathe, like spinal cord injuries or seizure disorders

Persons who are 50-64 years old

- Many people in this age group have or may have ongoing health problems.
- Getting a flu shot every year will cut down on doctor visits and missing work because of illness.

You may look and feel healthy, but if you have a condition like diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, or asthma, you are more likely to have complications from the flu.

Persons who live with or care for persons at increased risk for influenza

Because the flu is easy to catch, anyone could bring the virus to someone who is at high risk for complications. This is why people who live with or care for someone at increased risk should get the flu vaccine every year.

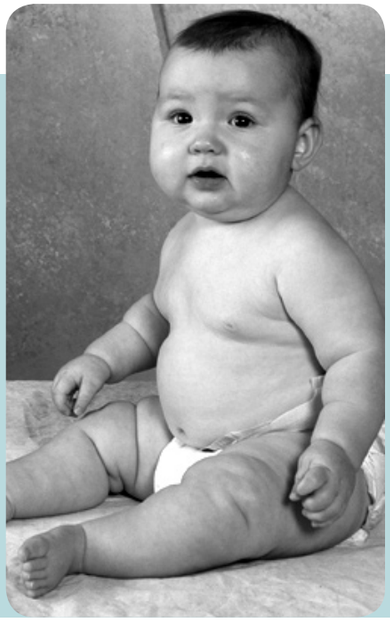
This includes:

- Anyone living with or caring for children under 5 years of age
  - Family members living with persons at increased risk for flu (brothers and sisters, too)
  - Babysitters and daycare providers
- Health care workers
- Employees of assisted living and group homes
- Persons who live with or provide home care to persons in groups at high risk

Can people still get the flu even if they get flu vaccine?

- Some people just happen to catch a cold a week or two after they get the flu vaccine. This is not the result of the flu vaccine – the flu is not a cold.
- Sometimes, people may still get the flu even though they got the flu vaccine. This sometimes happens to elderly people. When this takes place, these people don't get as sick as they would have if they had not gotten the flu vaccine.
- If you catch the virus before the vaccine gets a chance to work, you could get the flu. It takes about 2 weeks for the flu vaccine to work.

Health care workers should get the flu vaccine every fall. Don't give the flu to someone else. Protect your family and patients.



How often should people get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine only lasts a year, so you need to get it every year.

Are there side effects from the flu vaccine?

- Most people have little or no problems after receiving flu vaccine. Sometimes, people have mild problems after receiving the flu vaccine, like soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given. People might get a mild fever and some aches. If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the vaccine was given, last 1 to 2 days, and get better on their own. Remember, you cannot get influenza from the flu vaccine.
- Vaccines, like any other medicines, can possibly cause serious problems. However, serious problems from the flu vaccine are very rare.
- It is important to understand that the chance of being harmed from this disease is far greater than any chance of being harmed from the vaccine.