

Flu Vaccines

For Healthcare workers



Flu vaccines are the most important part of your flu prevention strategy.

There are many strategies that can help prevent getting sick with the flu, and they work best when combined. Hand washing, mask wearing, proper cough etiquette, and staying home when sick are all key components to flu prevention, but nothing is more important than getting your yearly flu vaccine. A flu vaccine is your best protection against the flu, and also the best way to protect your patients and clients from the flu.

Flu viruses are constantly changing, so flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the viruses that research suggests will be common during the upcoming flu season. Your protection from a flu vaccine declines over time. Yearly vaccination is needed for the best protection.

As a healthcare worker, you are a trusted member of your community. You have a professional and ethical responsibility to prevent the spread of infectious diseases to the population you serve. Vaccination is prevention!

Protect yourself. Protect your patients.

Healthcare workers are more likely to get the flu than other adults, and in a healthcare setting, flu can easily and quickly be spread to other staff and patients.

The first and most important step in [preventing flu](#) is to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. CDC also recommends everyday preventive actions (like covering coughs and sneezes, and frequent handwashing, and mask wearing) to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses, like flu.

Your best protection against the flu is the flu vaccine.

Millions of people get flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands or tens of thousands of people die. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and public health professionals recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every year. A flu vaccine is the best way to help prevent flu and its potentially serious complications. Remember that flu vaccine not only protects you, but it also can help protect those around you.

While some people who get a flu vaccine still get sick, vaccination can make their illness less severe. [Two recent studies](#) among hospitalized flu patients showed that flu vaccination reduced intensive care unit admissions and duration of hospitalization. Remember that a flu vaccine not only protects you, but it also can help protect those around you, including people who are at higher risk for serious flu illness, like babies, young children, older adults, pregnant people, and people with certain chronic health conditions.

For more than 50 years, hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received seasonal flu vaccines and there has [been extensive research supporting its safety](#). Side effects from flu vaccination are generally mild, especially when compared to symptoms of flu.

Other actions

In addition to your flu vaccine, you'll want to take other actions that have been shown to reduce the spread of the flu. While a flu vaccine is your best defense, ideally you should also:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing
- Wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated frequently.
- While sick, limit your contact as much as possible and consider staying home to limit the spread of illness.
- If you get sick with the flu, you may consider asking your doctor about anti-viral medication to help reduce flu symptoms and shorten your time spent sick.

For more information, visit [FluFreeWA.org](https://www.flufreeWA.org).



DOH 348-931 October 2023 CS

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.