

## Flu Vaccine FAQ for Patients and Caregivers, 2023–2024

Stanford Children's Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that all eligible children 6 months of age or older receive the seasonal flu vaccine. Below are answers to frequently asked questions by patients and their caregivers related to flu vaccination, as well as links to additional information.

### **Q: Why should my child get a flu vaccine?**

**A:** Flu vaccines are safe, effective, and the best way to protect your child from becoming infected with the influenza virus. Also, the flu vaccine can help prevent severe complications from the flu in children, including hospitalization and death.

### **Q: What are the recommendations for flu shots in children?**

**A:** The Centers for Disease Control recommends that every child 6 months or older should receive the influenza vaccine each year unless there is a contraindication (such as a severe allergic reaction to a previous flu vaccine). Children 6 months through 8 years of age should get two doses of influenza vaccine at least four weeks apart in their first vaccination season. After that, they should receive a single dose yearly.

### **Q: What are the risks of flu in children?**

**A:** Most children who become infected with the influenza virus develop a fever, muscle aches, fatigue, and cold symptoms, including cough, which can last for several days before they recover fully. Unfortunately, each year, there are also a number of otherwise healthy children who develop significant complications from influenza infections such as pneumonia, encephalitis, and death. Children with asthma, weakened immune systems, and other chronic conditions are particularly vulnerable to these more serious complications.

### **Q: How protective is the vaccine?**

**A:** The efficacy of the vaccine varies from year to year, but in general the vaccine cuts in half the risk of hospitalization or death in children and young adults. Even in years when the vaccine is only 50% effective at preventing flu, vaccinated children and adults tend to have milder infections.

### **Q: What are possible side effects of the vaccine?**

**A:** Most side effects from the flu vaccine are mild. Some people may feel achy or have a mild fever and/or fatigue for one to two days after they receive the vaccine. These symptoms have been mistaken for the actual flu; however, a person cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine. Very rarely, a person may experience an allergic reaction to the vaccine, so be sure to let your doctor, nurse, or clinic know if you have had an allergic reaction to a previous dose of the flu vaccine or one of its components.



**Q: Can my child still receive the flu vaccine if he or she has an allergy to eggs?**

**A:** Yes, children and young adults with a history of egg allergy of any severity may still safely receive the flu vaccine each year. You should still notify your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic of an egg allergy. However, additional safety measures beyond those recommended for the receipt of any vaccine are no longer recommended per recent guidelines.

**Q: What types of flu vaccine are available at Stanford Children's Health this year?**

**A:** During the 2023–2024 influenza season, Stanford Children's Health will be offering the flu shot only (i.e., given in the arm, buttock, or thigh, depending on the age and size of the child). The nasal spray version of the flu vaccine will not be offered this year.

**Q: When is the best time to get a flu vaccine?**

**A:** The immunity you get from the influenza vaccination can decrease throughout the season. September or October is considered the optimal time to get vaccinated since the peak of flu season is often in January or February, but vaccination can occur anytime in the flu season. Vaccines are available now, and parents should use any opportunity to get their kids vaccinated.

**Q: Where can my child get a flu shot?**

**A:** Your local pediatrician's office is the best place to get a flu shot. They know you, and they know your child's medical history. Flu shots are offered by your Stanford Children's Health provider and at select clinic locations. View more information at [flushots.stanfordchildrens.org](https://flushots.stanfordchildrens.org).

**Q: Can my child get both the flu shot and the COVID-19 shot at the same time?**

**A:** Flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be given on the same day or at the same clinic visit. For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, please visit our [COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#) or the CDC [website](#).