



Banner Thunderbird
Medical Center

Kris Korte, RN, is the Director of Infection Control at Banner Thunderbird Medical Center.

Why should I get vaccinated against the flu?

Influenza is a serious disease, and people of any age can get it. On an annual basis, the flu causes approximately 36,000 deaths, most of which are over the age of 65; and more than 200,000 hospitalizations in the United States. During “flu season (November – April), flu viruses are circulating in the population. The best way to reduce chances of contracting the flu is to get a flu shot or the nasal-spray flu vaccine.

Overall, in years when the vaccine and circulating viruses are well-matched, influenza vaccines can be expected to reduce laboratory-confirmed influenza by approximately 70% to 90% in healthy adults over the age of 65. Several studies have also found reductions in fever-related illness, influenza-related work absenteeism, antibiotic use, and doctor visits.

When should I get a flu vaccination?

Starting in September, flu shots should be offered to people when they are seen by health-care providers for routine care or as a result of hospitalization.

Because flu activity in the United States generally peaks between late December and early March, it’s best to get vaccinated in October or November.

How do flu vaccines work?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body, and these antibodies provide protection against influenza virus infection.

The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so *you cannot get the flu from a flu shot*. Some minor side effects that could occur are

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

Some individuals should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician.

These include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- Influenza vaccine is not approved for use in children less than 6 months of age.

- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it.

Does flu vaccine work right away?

No. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. In the meantime, you are still at risk for getting the flu. That's why it's better to get vaccinated early in the fall, before the flu season really gets under way.

This information can be found on the CDC - Influenza (Flu) website and with the Advisory Committee On Immunization Practices (ACIP) Recommendations on Prevention & Control of Influenza.