

Flu Vaccine for Preteens and Teens

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Why does my child need the flu vaccine?

The flu is an illness of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Flu spreads when infected people cough or sneeze. Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and in some cases can cause death. While most preteens and teens with the flu get better in a couple of weeks, some will get complications like sinus infections, or pneumonia (a serious lung infection). For preteens and teens who have chronic health problems like diabetes or asthma, flu symptoms can make their chronic health conditions worse. The flu usually causes a cough, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, fatigue (tiredness) and sometimes fever. Flu spreads easily when sick people cough, sneeze, or talk.

When should my child be vaccinated?

Preteens and teens (and everyone else 6 months and older) should get the flu vaccine every year as soon as it's available in their community. Flu vaccine is available at the doctor's office or clinic, and sometimes other places like the local health department, pharmacies, urgent care clinics, grocery stores, and schools.

What else should I know about the flu vaccine?

There are 2 flu vaccines that most preteens and teens can get:

- **The flu shot**, made from killed flu virus. This vaccine is a shot that is usually given in the arm.
- **The nasal spray flu vaccine**, made with live, but weakened, flu virus. This vaccine is sprayed up the nose. Preteens and teens with chronic health conditions, like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease should NOT get the nasal spray vaccine.

Talk to the doctor or nurse about which flu vaccine is best for your preteen or teen.

Both types of flu vaccine have been studied carefully and are safe and effective. They cannot cause the flu. The annual flu vaccine is recommended for preteens and teens by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine.

Both flu vaccines can sometimes cause mild, flu-like side effects, such as fever and muscle aches. This usually goes away in a day or two. The shot can cause soreness or swelling in the arm where it was given. Some preteens and teens might faint after getting the flu shot or any shot. Sitting or lying down when getting the shot and then for about 15 minutes after the shot, can help avoid fainting. Serious side effects from either type of flu vaccine are rare. It is very important to tell the doctor or nurse if your preteen or teen has a severe allergy to chicken eggs.

How can I get help paying for these vaccines?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines for children ages 18 years and younger, who are not insured or under-insured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native. You can find out more about the VFC program by going online to www.cdc.gov and typing VFC in the search box.

Where can I learn more?

Talk to your child's doctor or nurse to learn more about the flu vaccine and any other vaccines your preteen and teen needs. There is more information about these vaccines on CDC's Vaccines for Preteens and Teens website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens.



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