

The flu shot and older adults



A flu shot (vaccine) lessens your chance of getting sick

A good way to lessen your chance of getting the flu is to get a yearly flu shot. This helps you make antibodies. Antibodies fight off the germs (virus) that cause the flu.

Problems related to the flu

As you age, your immune system, or how well your body protects itself, gets weaker. So if you get the flu, you have a higher chance of needing to go to the hospital. As many as 7 out of 10 people who go to the hospital for flu are over the age of 65. Eight out of 10 people who die from the flu are over the age of 65.

Should people 65 years and older get a different vaccine?

All flu vaccines help keep you safe from the flu. The CDC prefers certain vaccines for people 65 and older. But don't wait for a specific one. The most important thing is to get vaccinated. Talk to your doctor about what's right for you.

When should you get your flu shot?

The best time to get a flu shot is in the early fall, **between September and the end of October.**

What else can you do to keep from getting the flu?

- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often.
- Try not to touch your face.
- Ask your doctor about getting other shots like COVID-19, pneumonia, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). If you have not yet had these, see if they're right for you.
- Wear a mask covering your mouth and nose when in public.

If you still get the flu, get help

Whether you've had the flu vaccine or not, get medical care right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Long periods of feeling dizzy or confused
- Not peeing
- Fever that can't be lowered with over-the-counter medicines or is getting worse

As we get older, our bodies don't fight off the flu as well. This means the flu can lead to more serious problems.

If you do get the flu, your doctor might give you medicine to help you feel better faster. But here's the important part. These medicines work best when you start them within the first 2 days of feeling sick. So don't wait. **Call your doctor right away if you think you have the flu.**

Schedule an appointment with your PCP's office or book directly through MyChart.



- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People 65 years and older and influenza. cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm.
- Grohskopf LA, Ferdinands JM, Blanton LH, Broder KR, Loehr J. Prevention and control of seasonal influenza with vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices — United States, 2024–25 influenza season. MMWR Recomm Rep 2024;73(No. RR-5):1–25.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About influenza. cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html.

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