

FLU VACCINE FAQ'S

“I am just getting over a cold. Can I still receive the flu vaccine?”

It is usually okay to get the flu vaccine if you have a mild illness. If symptoms are more severe, for example you are having a high fever, you should delay until you feel better.

“I am taking antibiotics. Can I still receive the flu vaccine?”

Antibiotics do not affect the effectiveness (or immune response) of the flu vaccine. (See above).

“I am pregnant. Is it safe for me to receive the flu vaccine?”

Yes! It is safe and recommended. When more people get vaccinated, less flu can spread through the community. One study found that women vaccinated with the pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine who had also been vaccinated the prior season with an H1N1 flu vaccine had an increased risk of miscarriage in the 28 days after vaccination. Earlier studies have not found a link between a single flu vaccination and miscarriage and there is ongoing research. At this time recommendations about getting the flu shot while pregnant have not changed. We have preservative free vaccination available. Pregnant and postpartum women are at higher risk for severe illness and complications from influenza, and vaccination helps protect women during and after pregnancy. It also helps protect the developing baby during pregnancy and for several months after the baby is born. If you have questions about your individual situation you should talk with your OB.

“My child has asthma. Can she receive the flu vaccine?”

Yes, children with asthma should get the flu vaccine every year. It can help prevent asthma exacerbations and serious respiratory complications from the flu.

“I don't get sick. Why should I get the flu vaccine?”

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. Every flu season is unique and can affect people differently. Everyone with influenza, even if a mild case, spreads the virus to others. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get seasonal flu and spread it to others.

“The flu vaccine makes me sick. Why should I get the flu vaccine?”

The flu vaccine does not cause flu. It is made with an inactivated virus that is not infectious. Some minor side effects that may occur are soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, low grade fever, or aches. If these problems occur, they begin soon after vaccination and are mild and short-lived. Remember it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection.

“My child received their first dose of the flu vaccine. When do they need their second dose?”

Children aged 6 months to 8 years, who have never been vaccinated against influenza or for whom vaccination history is unknown, should receive a second dose at least 28 days after the first dose. After the first year, children only need one flu vaccine per year.

“I have a latex allergy. Can I receive the flu vaccine?”

All of our supplies including band-aids and gloves as well as our flu vaccine are all latex-free.

FLU VACCINE FAQ'S...continued

“I have an egg allergy. Can I still receive the flu vaccine?”

People with a history of egg allergy who can eat lightly cooked eggs or eggs baked into food or whose only reaction is hives and have tolerated the flu vaccine in the past can receive flu vaccine. If you have more serious reactions to eggs such as anaphylaxis, cardiovascular reactions, or anything requiring an epi-pen you may still be able to get a flu vaccine. If you are 18 or older we have egg free FluBlok available. For people aged 17 or under we request you get your vaccine in the pediatric department or with an allergist so you can be monitored for 30 minutes. Reaction is very rare, but can occur.

“What is the High Dose Vaccine and is it recommended?”

Fluzone High-Dose vaccine contains four times the amount of antigen than the regular flu shot. It is intended to create a stronger immune response in the person getting the vaccine. Aging decreases the body's ability to have a good immune response after getting influenza vaccine so this is available for adults 65 and older with the goal of providing better protection against the flu. One study showed it to be up to 24% more effective and many studies have shown increased antibody response. There have also been higher reports of some adverse events such as pain, redness at the injection site, headache, muscles aches and malaise. Therefore, it is not recommended for those who have had severe reactions to flu vaccine. The Polyclinic and the CDC do not recommend one vaccine over another for those over age 65. If you have questions about your individual situation, talk with your primary care provider.”

“My child only gets FluMist. Why can't they have it? Can they get it somewhere else?”

In light of low effectiveness against influenza A (H1N1) in the U.S. during the 2013-14 and 2015-16 seasons, the CDC recommended that the FluMist not be used during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons. It is however, still an FDA-licensed product and there will likely be a supply of FluMist on the U.S. market during the 2018-19 season. We will not be providing FluMist at The Polyclinic. As a clinic, our providers have made the decision to wait until new studies on the effectiveness of FluMist have been published.

“I don't want my child to have a vaccine with Thimerosal. I read the mercury never leaves the body and can make you sick and cause autism.”

Not all types of mercury are the same. Thimerosal is an ethyl mercury-based preservative. Unlike mercury in some kinds of fish, Thimerosal leaves the body very quickly. It has been used in vaccines since the 1930s and scientists have found it to be very safe. In fact, they use it to prevent bacteria from growing in vaccines, which could make you very sick. Numerous studies have been done which show no link between Thimerosal and autism.

“What is in this year's Flu Vaccine?”

A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1) pdm09 – like virus

A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2) – like virus (different from last year)

B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus (not in trivalent)

B/Colorado/06/2017-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus (different from last year)