

FOR THE PUBLIC

Be Informed and Be Prepared

Seasonal Influenza

The **flu** is also known as **influenza**. **Influenza** is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Getting vaccinated each year is the best way to prevent the flu.

Older people, young children, pregnant women and people with chronic conditions are at higher risk for flu related complications. Yearly vaccination is a unique way of supporting everyone, regardless of health status.

The **best** way to prevent the flu is thru annual influenza vaccination. Influenza vaccination is recommended for every person in the United States *6 months and older*.

The Vaccine is Available in Two Ways

1. Available for intramuscular administration (injection) to people older than 6 months.
2. Nasal spray administration. Recommended *only* for people ages 2 through 49. *Not* recommended for pregnant women or women who are thinking of becoming pregnant.

A heavier dose is recommended for people older than 65 years.

At the present time, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has not expressed a preference for the nasal spray or the injection.

For Pregnant Women

The seasonal flu clearly impacts pregnant women. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that pregnant women are at a higher risk group for complications of the flu. If you are pregnant or know a person who is pregnant, the ACIP and the CDC recommend pregnant women receive the **inactivated vaccine** (intramuscular administration).

A Strategy for Pregnant Women

Pregnant women *should* receive the **inactivated vaccine**. Since children less than 6 months are NOT recommended to get vaccinated, getting vaccinated while pregnant will be like one-vaccine-for-two. Recent clinical studies have demonstrated that getting vaccinated while pregnant will serve as an additional benefit to the infant.

Young Children

1. Young children who **NEVER** had a seasonal vaccine will need two different vaccines—one for the flu and one for H1N1. Make sure you speak to your medical provider to protect yourself and other people against the flu.

For the current 2010-2011 flu season, the seasonal flu vaccine is two-in-one; the flu vaccine also contains protection against H1N1 flu.

Always remember your basic steps to eliminate the spread of the flu (influenza)

- Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly
- Cover your sneeze and cough with your sleeve or a tissue
- Stay home if you are sick