

# Wellness Newsletter

## Preventing Spread of Seasonal Influenza

SEPTEMBER 2018

***Flu shots are kind of like voting. If you don't bother to get vaccinated, you haven't earned the right to complain when you get sick.***

Public health officials recommend annual vaccination for children starting at 6 months old and all adults, including pregnant women, unless they have a condition that precludes safe administration.

Seasonal influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by exposure to viruses. Vaccination provides individual protection against the viruses scientists determine will be most prevalent during any given season.

Vaccination also helps prevent the spread of illness to family members, co-workers and vulnerable populations such as the elderly, infants and people with certain health conditions who have a higher risk of serious flu-related complications (such as asthma, bronchitis or pneumonia), hospitalization and death. The concept of group, or herd, immunity applies to other types of immunizations, as well.

### Annual Vaccination

Vaccines promote the development of antibodies that provide protection against infection beginning about two weeks after vaccination. For the 2018-19 season, quadrivalent vaccine that protects against two type-A and two type-B viruses or trivalent vaccine for protection against two type-A and one type-B virus strains are recommended depending on exposure risk.

The flu vaccine does not cause the flu. However, some people may experience temporary, relatively mild symptoms or discomfort from the shot. With vaccination, it's still possible to get sick after being exposed to a flu virus, but symptoms are likely to be milder.



Vaccine effectiveness is evaluated and adjusted annually for Northern and Southern Hemisphere flu seasons starting in the fall and tapering off in the spring. Viruses change over time. For example, a new variant of H1N1 emerged in 2009 and caused the first influenza pandemic (global outbreak) in more than 40 years. The H3N2 virus that caused the 2017-18 U.S. flu epidemic (regional outbreak) caused alarm because it is associated with severe symptoms and was less responsive to vaccine than other virus types.

### Administering the Vaccine

Most people get a flu shot in the upper-arm muscle. However, certain vaccine formulations and/or other routes of administration are recommended for use in certain groups of people. Age, health status and allergies are taken into consideration.

For the 2018-19 flu season, the administration of live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) using nasal mist may be offered as an alternative with guidance from a medical provider. During the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons, LAIV was not recommended because of concerns about low effectiveness against H1N1-like viruses.

