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## SP565-Are You Due for the Flu Shot this Fall?

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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## What Are the Risks From the Flu Shot?

A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of a vaccine causing serious harm or death is extremely small. Almost all people who get the flu vaccine have no serious problems from it. The viruses in the vaccine are killed, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

Mild problems include soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given; fever; and aches. If these problems occur, it is within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.

## Will My Health Insurance Pay for the Flu Shot?

✓ Contact your insurance carrier to find out if the shot is covered.

If you are a beneficiary of Medicare, Part B of Medicare will pay for the shot.



## Want More Information?

For more information, check out these Internet sites:

- ☐ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Immunization Program  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>
- ☐ Immunization Action Coalition  
<http://www.immunize.org/>
- ☐ UT Center for Community Health Literacy  
<http://fcs.tennessee.edu/centers/healthlit/index.htm>

For publications about other immunizations for adults, contact your county Extension office or your pharmacist.

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Immunization Program.

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## What You Need to Know to Protect Yourself from the Flu (Influenza)



## Why Get Immunized for the Flu?

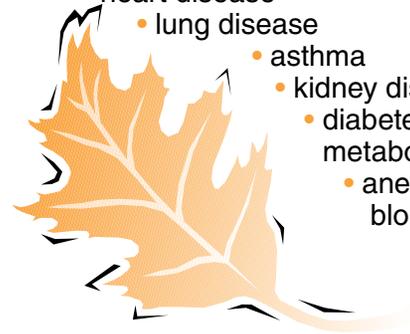
The flu (influenza) is a serious disease. It is caused by a virus, which spreads through the air from infected persons to others through their nose or throat. The flu can cause fever, cough, chills, sore throat, headache and muscle aches.

People of any age can get the flu. Most people are ill with the flu for only a few days, but some become much sicker and may need to be hospitalized. The flu causes thousands of deaths each year, mostly among the elderly.

**A flu shot can help prevent the flu.**

## Who Should Get the Flu Vaccine?

- ✓ Children 6 months to 18 years.
- ✓ Everyone 50 years of age or older.
- ✓ Residents of long-term care facilities that care for persons with chronic medical conditions.
- ✓ Anyone who has a serious long-term health problem with the following:
  - heart disease
  - lung disease
  - asthma
  - kidney disease
  - diabetes and other metabolic diseases
  - anemia and other blood disorders



- ✓ Anyone whose immune system is weakened because of the following:
  - HIV/AIDS or other diseases that affect the immune system
  - long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids
  - cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs
- ✓ Anyone 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term aspirin treatment (who could develop Reye's Syndrome if they catch influenza).
- ✓ Women who are pregnant during the influenza season.
- ✓ Physicians, nurses, family members or anyone else coming in close contact with people at risk of serious influenza.
- ✓ Students and staff at schools and colleges, to prevent outbreaks.
- ✓ Anyone who wants to reduce his or her chance of catching influenza.

## When Should I Get the Flu Shot?

The "flu season" extends from November to April each year. Therefore, the best time to get the flu shot is between September and December. A new shot is needed every year.

- ✓ People 9 years of age and older need one shot.
- ✓ Children less than 9 years old may need two shots, given one month apart.



## Can I Get the Flu Even Though I Get the Shot This Year?



**Yes.** Flu viruses change often, and they might not always be covered by the vaccine. However, people who do get the flu even though they have been vaccinated often have a milder case than those who did not get the shot.

Also, many people think "the flu" is any illness with fever and cold symptoms. They may expect the flu shot to prevent these illnesses, but the flu shot is effective only against illness caused by the influenza virus. It is not effective against other causes of fever and colds.

## Should Some People Consult with a Doctor Before Getting the Flu Shot?

**Yes.** Consult with a doctor before getting a flu shot if you have the following:

- ✓ A serious allergic reaction to eggs or a previous dose of the flu vaccine.
- ✓ A history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome.
- ✓ Are moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled. You should usually wait until you recover and reschedule the flu shot for another time.