

Protect Your Patients With the Flu Vaccine: Flu Season Has Arrived

Help reduce flu-related illness, hospitalizations and complications by encouraging flu vaccination.

Patients ages 6 months and older who get the flu vaccine may help to reduce:

- ✓ **Frequency of illness caused by the flu.**
- ✓ **Spreading the flu to others.**
- ✓ **Outpatient visits, hospital stays and intensive care unit admissions.**

Reassure patients about the flu vaccine

- **Give strong reasons to get their flu shot and address any barriers.**
 - Patients are more likely to get a flu shot if their doctor recommends it.
 - Provide the flu vaccine during appointments. Improve vaccination rates with walk-in flu vaccine clinics.
 - Address patients' health beliefs and perceptions about the flu vaccine. Remember to address barriers, such as perceived risk and susceptibility to the flu or the belief that they don't need a flu shot.
 - Flu vaccination may not always prevent infection but it can make symptoms less severe. It can also reduce the risk of patient hospitalization.
- **Addressing flu vaccine hesitation and refusal.**
 - If a patient or patients refuse an influenza vaccine, probe for reasons, and provide answers to any concerns.
 - If a patient continues to refuse an influenza vaccine, share an informational handout to help advance education beyond the office visit and follow up later.
 - Use the “presumptive approach” to set the tone that getting a flu vaccine is routine.
 - Address patient questions and concerns about the vaccine, including side effects, safety, and vaccine effectiveness in plain and understandable language.
 - Reinforce the flu vaccine is safe and effective.



**2025-2026
Vaccine updates**
*Educate, vaccinate,
protect from flu*

(continued)

- **Some people may be at higher risk of developing serious flu complications. Those at higher risk include:**

- People ages 65 and older.
- People who smoke or have underlying medical conditions, like diabetes, heart disease, asthma, lung disease, neurologic disorders, and weakened immune systems.
- People who are pregnant and children under age 5.
- Populations who are disproportionately affected by chronic medical conditions that can increase the risk of severe flu.
- Caregivers and residents in long-term care facilities.
- Employees who work with the public.

Updates for the flu vaccine for 2025-2026

With the exception of vaccination for adults ages 65 and older, there is no preferred recommendation made for one flu vaccine product over another. Below are highlights of the latest recommendations¹ for this flu season:

- All persons ages 6 months and older should receive a routine annual flu vaccination with a licensed, recommended and age-appropriate vaccine, unless they have specific contraindications.²
- Offer vaccinations as soon as available, and ideally before the end of October. Continue to offer them through the season based on supply. The flu may not appear in some areas until February or March.

- Adults ages 65 and older should receive any one of the following higher dose or adjuvanted influenza vaccines:
 - Trivalent recombinant influenza vaccine (RIV3) or
 - Trivalent adjuvanted inactivated influenza vaccine (aIV3)

If none of these vaccines are available at vaccine administration, then any other age-appropriate influenza vaccine should be used.

- View the full report of recommendations at bit.ly/CDD-MMWRReport for more information about:
 - Groups recommended for vaccination and the timing of vaccination.
 - Available vaccine products and indications. This includes recent regulatory actions on new vaccine licensures and labeling changes for previously licensed vaccines.
 - Vaccine dosage for children through older adults.
 - Guidance for use in specific populations and situations (high risk, caregivers, pregnancy and history of Guillain-Barré, travelers).
 - Recommendations for people with an egg allergy.
 - Vaccine selection and timing of vaccinations for immunocompromised people.

Note: Different flu vaccine preparations have different indications as licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/flu for the most current flu vaccine recommendations.



How is the flu vaccine reimbursed?

The flu vaccine is reimbursed according to the terms of the *Provider Participation Agreement (PPA)* and the member's benefit plan.

Reminder

Wellcare and delegated at-risk independent practice associations must cover the flu vaccine for all members as an essential preventive services benefit. It is not subject to prior authorization or cost share.

¹ Grohskopf LA, Blanton LH, Ferdinands JM, Reed C, Dugan VG, Daskalakis DC. Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices — United States, 2025–26 Influenza Season. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2025;74:500–507. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7432a2>.

² Various flu vaccine products are licensed and available from several different manufacturers. Go to the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/media/pdfs/2025-2026-summary-of-recommendations.pdf> for more information about available flu vaccines for the 2025-2026 influenza season.