

# Influenza Information Toolkit

**Background:** Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory virus that can cause symptoms such as a fever, cough and congestion. The first recording of an influenza outbreak dates as far back as 1580. In 1918, the first flu pandemic, known as the Spanish Flu, emerged and resulted in over 50 million fatalities worldwide. To combat the most devastating influenza outbreak, researchers began developing flu vaccines between 1930-1940. These vaccines were first made available to members of the military, before becoming approved for public use in 1945. Despite the development of these vaccines, several other Influenza outbreaks occurred over the next several decades.

In response to the continued outbreaks of influenza, researchers began developing flu vaccines that targeted specific flu strains and creating a vaccination program aimed at preventing flu pandemics. At first these vaccinations were recommended to children 6-23 months. The age recommendation was then extended to 6 months- 18 years. After another outbreak of the flu in 2009, resulting in 12,000 deaths in the U.S. alone, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices formally recommended vaccines for **everyone** 6 months and older.

The Influenza virus is not limited to pandemics; seasonal flu outbreaks occur every year around the winter months. These seasonal outbreaks cause millions of infections and thousands of deaths each year. Influenza viruses are continuously evolving. Annual flu vaccinations are needed to protect against the most current strains of the virus. Vaccination is a crucial tool in preventing getting sick with the flu, reducing the severity of flu illness, and decreasing the risk of hospitalization due to influenza.

Research shows that the flu vaccine works in preventing serious illness. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor with flu by 40% to 60% (CDC). A 2018 study showed that among adults hospitalized with flu, vaccinated patients were 59% less likely to be admitted to the ICU than those who had not been vaccinated (Thompson et al, 2018.) When looking at children with underlying high-risk medical conditions, a CDC study found that flu vaccination reduced the risk of flu-associated death by 51%.

Researchers reported, “During a season when vaccine-mismatched influenza viruses predominated, vaccination was associated with a reduced risk of critical and life-threatening influenza illness in children” (CDC).

Getting vaccinated against influenza is important in protecting our friends, family, and communities. The following resources were developed to answer questions, and guide conversations, related to influenza. We hope these materials help to empower individuals and families in making their own informed preventative healthcare decisions that lead to healthier and happier communities.

## Burden of the Flu:

For more information visit this link:

[What is it?](#)

## Who should Get Vaccinated:

For more information visit these links:

[All Age Guidance: COVID and Flu](#)

[Flu by Age Group](#)

## What is the Flu vaccine?

[Myths](#)

[Why Pregnant Women Should Fight the Flu By Getting Vaccinated](#)

[Getting a Flu Shot While Pregnant](#)

## Find Flu Vaccines in Your Area:

For more information visit these links:

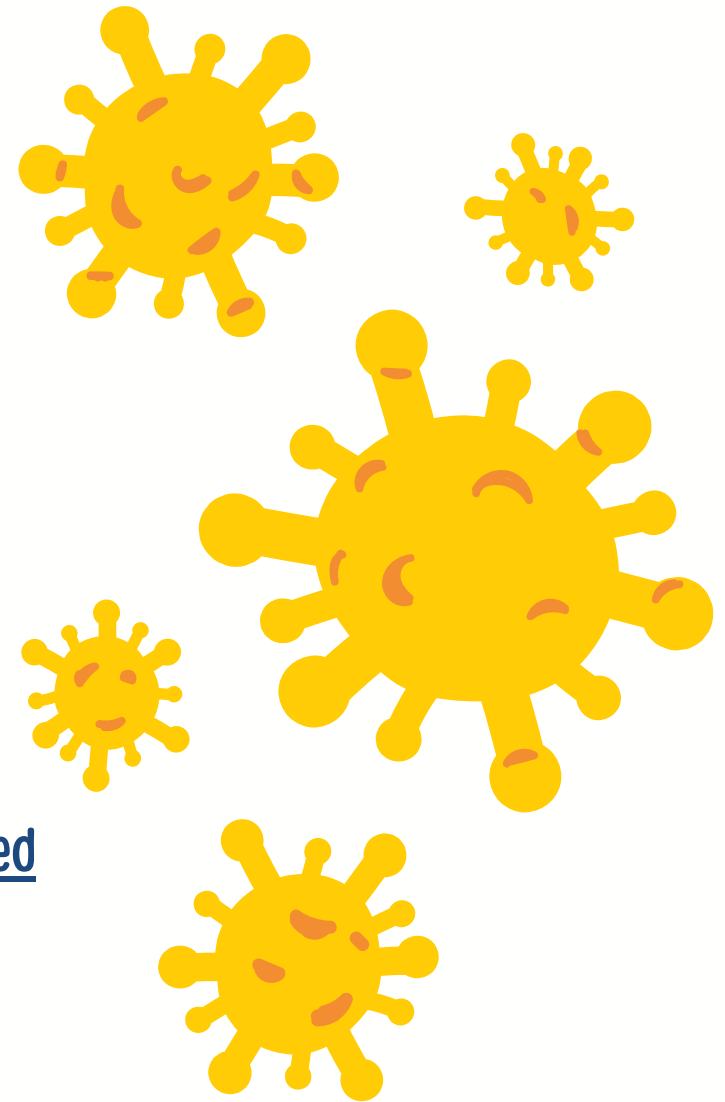
[Using health insurance to access flu vaccines & where to go if uninsured.](#)

[Vaccines For Children Program](#)

[Adult Influenza Vaccine Initiative](#)

[CDC Bridge Access Program](#)

OR Visit: [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)



## Relevant Studies

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264410X18309976?via%3Dihub>

- Influenza vaccine effectiveness in preventing influenza-associated intensive care admissions and attenuating severe disease among adults in New Zealand 2012–2015
- Inactivated influenza vaccines prevented influenza-associated ICU admissions, may have higher effectiveness in ICU than GW hospital settings, and appeared to reduce the risk of severe disease among those who are infected despite vaccination.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p0403-flu-vaccine.html>

- “Every year CDC receives reports of children who died from the flu. This study tells us that we can prevent more of these deaths by vaccinating more,” said Brendan Flannery, PhD, lead author and epidemiologist in the Influenza Division. “We looked at four seasons when we know from other studies that the vaccine prevented flu illness, and we found consistent protection against flu deaths in children.”

## Citations:

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Bose, Dr. P. (2023, March 31). Combating vaccine fatigue: Study offers actionable steps to boost acceptance. News Medical Life Sciences. <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20230330/Combating-vaccine-fatigue-Study-offers-actionable-steps-to-boost-acceptance.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, October 4). Disease Burden of Flu. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/index.html>

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Goller, L. (2023, August 1). Plans for Fall Vaccination Campaigns?. Home - Partnering for Vaccine Equity Learning Community. <https://vaccineequity.urban.org/discussion/plans-for-fall-vaccination-campaigns>



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