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has a weakened immune system. Vaccination can lessen illness severity and is particularly important for people at high risk for serious flu-related complications and close contacts of high-risk people. Children younger than 6 months old are the pediatric group at highest risk of influenza complications, but they are too young to get a flu vaccine. The best way to protect young children is to make sure members of their household and their caregivers are vaccinated.

### Does getting vaccinated against seasonal flu early in the season pose a risk that immunity may wane before the end of the season?

No. Seasonal flu vaccination provides protection against the influenza strains contained in the vaccine through one influenza season. Vaccination can begin as soon as vaccine is available. So *except for some children*, only one dose of vaccine is needed.

### Can vaccinating someone twice provide added immunity?

Studies have not demonstrated a benefit of receiving more than one dose during an influenza season, even among elderly persons with weakened immune systems. *Except for some children*, only one dose of flu vaccine is recommended each season.

### Can a nasal spray flu vaccine give you the flu?

Unlike the flu shot, the nasal spray flu vaccine does contain live viruses. However, the viruses are attenuated (weakened) and cannot cause flu illness. The weakened viruses are cold-adapted, which means they are designed to only cause infection at the cooler temperatures found within the nose. The viruses cannot infect the lungs or other areas where warmer temperatures exist. Some children and young adults 2–17 years of age have reported experiencing mild reactions after receiving nasal spray flu vaccine, including runny nose, nasal congestion or cough, chills, tiredness/weakness, sore throat and headache. Some adults 18–49 years of age have reported runny nose or nasal congestion, cough, chills, tiredness/weakness, sore throat and headache. These side effects are mild and short-lasting, especially when compared to symptoms of seasonal influenza infection.

For links to up-to-date information visit the Littleton Regional Hospital web site at: [www.littletonhospital.org](http://www.littletonhospital.org)



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### Is it too early to get a flu vaccine in September?

No. CDC recommends that providers begin to offer flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available in the fall. Immunity from vaccination will last throughout the year.

### Is it too late to get vaccinated after Thanksgiving (or the end of November)?

No. Vaccination can still be beneficial as long as influenza viruses are circulating. CDC recommends that providers begin to offer influenza vaccination as soon as vaccine becomes available in the fall, but if you have not been vaccinated by Thanksgiving (or the end of November), it can still be protective to get vaccinated in December or later. Influenza is unpredictable and seasons can vary. Seasonal influenza disease usually peaks in January or February most years, but disease can occur as late as May.

### Is the “stomach flu” really the flu?

No. Many people use the term “stomach flu” to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. These symptoms can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria or even parasites. While vomiting, diarrhea, and being nauseous or “sick to your stomach” can sometimes be related to the flu—more commonly in children than adults—these problems are rarely the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease.

Resource: CDC.GOV



## Clean Hands Save Lives!

- It is best to wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- When water is not available, use alcohol-based products (sanitizers).
- Keeping your hands clean helps you avoid getting sick.

### When should you wash your hands?

- Before preparing or eating food
- After going to the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- After handling uncooked foods, particularly raw meat, poultry, or fish
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After handling items contaminated by floodwater or sewage
- When your hands are visibly dirty

NOVEMBER 2010

# Seasonal Flu News

LITTLETON REGIONAL HOSPITAL • 600 ST. JOHNSBURY ROAD, LITTLETON, NH 03561 • [www.littletonhospital.org](http://www.littletonhospital.org)



## Misconceptions about Seasonal Influenza and Influenza Vaccines

### Can a flu shot give you the flu?

No, a flu shot cannot cause flu illness. The influenza viruses contained in a flu shot are inactivated (killed), which means they cannot cause infection. Flu vaccine manufacturers kill the viruses used in the process of making vaccine, and batches of flu vaccine are tested to make sure they are safe. In randomized blinded studies, where some people get flu shots and others get salt water shots, the only differences in symptoms was increased soreness in the arm and redness at the injection site among people who got the flu shot. There were no differences in terms of body aches, fever, cough, runny nose or sore throat.

### Why do some people not feel well after getting the seasonal flu shot?

The most common side effect of seasonal flu shots in adults has been soreness at the spot where the shot was given, which usually lasts less than two days. The soreness is often caused by a person's immune system making protective antibodies to the killed viruses in the vaccine. These antibodies are what allow the body to fight against flu. The needle stick may also cause some soreness at the injection site. According to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), rare symptoms include fever, muscle pain and feelings of discomfort or weakness. If these problems occur, they are very uncommon and usually begin soon after the shot and last 1–2 days.

### What about people who get a seasonal flu vaccine and still get sick with flu-like symptoms?

There are several reasons why someone might get flu-like symptoms even after they have been vaccinated against seasonal flu.

1. A person may be exposed to one of the influenza viruses in the vaccine shortly before getting vaccinated or during the two-week period that it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated. This exposure may result in a person becoming ill with flu before protection from the vaccine takes effect.
2. A person may become ill from non-flu viruses like rhinovirus that circulate during the flu season, which can also cause flu-like symptoms. Flu vaccine will not protect people from respiratory illness that is not caused by flu viruses.
3. A person may be exposed to an influenza virus that is very different from the viruses included in the vaccine. The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends largely on the similarity or match between viruses in the vaccine and those in circulation. There are many different influenza viruses. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/index.htm](http://cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/index.htm).



4. Unfortunately, some people can remain unprotected from flu despite getting the vaccine. This is more likely to occur among people that have weakened immune systems or the elderly. However, even among these people, a flu vaccine can still help prevent complications. For more information about the effectiveness of the seasonal flu vaccine, visit [cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/vaccineeffect.htm](http://cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/vaccineeffect.htm)?

Seasonal influenza vaccine provides the best available protection from seasonal flu—even when the vaccine does not exactly match circulating seasonal flu strains, and even when the person getting the vaccine

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**Influenza Flu Clinics**  
**LRH WALK-IN VACCINE CLINIC**  
Tuesdays / Thursdays / Fridays  
8:30 am–6:30 pm  
LRH Emergency Dept. Family Room—  
located near the Main Lobby  
**\$20 per person**  
Must be 18 years or older  
Cash, check, credit/debit card, or Medicare.  
Receipts provided.  
Questions? Call LRH Occupational  
Health Services at (603) 444-9294.

## 2010–11 Seasonal Flu Vaccine FAQs

### Who should get a flu vaccine this season?

All people 6 months and older are now recommended to receive annual influenza vaccination. This is a new and expanded recommendation for this season. In February, 2010, CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted in favor of universal influenza vaccination in the United States to protect as many people as possible against the flu.

### Will I have to get two flu vaccines again this season?

No. Only one flu vaccine is being made this year, and most people will only need to get vaccinated once. There is one exception to this: CDC recommends that children aged 6 months through 8 years of age who have never received a seasonal flu vaccine get two doses of vaccine spaced at least 4 weeks apart.

- Two doses given at least 4 weeks apart are recommended for children aged 6 months through 8 years of age who are getting a flu vaccine for the first time. Children who only got 1 dose in their first year of vaccination should get 2 doses the following year.
- All children 6 months–8 years of age getting a flu vaccine for the first time need two doses, at least 4 weeks apart, the first year they are vaccinated in order to develop immune protection. This includes children who received one or two doses of the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, but who have never received a seasonal flu vaccine.

### What viruses will the new vaccine protect against?

The flu vaccine is updated every year to combat the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the upcoming season. The 2010–2011 flu vaccine is being made in the same way as seasonal vaccines have been made for decades. It will protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season, and two other influenza viruses (an H3N2 virus and an influenza B virus). About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

Even people that got vaccinated with the 2009 H1N1 vaccine or last year's seasonal vaccine need to be vaccinated with the seasonal flu vaccine this year. This season's vaccine provides protection against other influenza strains that were not in the seasonal or the 2009 H1N1 vaccine last year. Immunity from a vaccine gotten last year may decline over time.

### Is there a new vaccine for people 65 years or older?

Yes. Persons 65 years or older and their providers can choose any of the currently licensed inactivated vaccines, including **Fluzone High-Dose**, a new vaccine designed specifically for people 65 years and older. For more information, see Questions & Answers Fluzone High-Dose Seasonal Influenza Vaccine.

### Are there new groups of people at higher risk of serious flu complications this season?

Yes. Morbid obesity is a newly recognized medical risk factor for influenza complications based on information from last flu season. Morbid obesity is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI)  $\geq 40$ . Also, last flu season, Native Americans and Alaskans were found to be at greater risk of complications from the flu.

Resource: CDC.GOV

## What You Need to Know About Pneumococcal Disease for Adults

### What is pneumococcal disease?

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. When these bacteria invade the lungs, they can cause pneumonia. They can also invade the bloodstream (bacteremia) and/or the tissues and fluids surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Invasive pneumococcal infection kills thousands of people in the United States each year, most of them 65 years of age or older.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of pneumococcal pneumonia include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and chest pain. The symptoms of pneumococcal meningitis include stiff neck, fever, mental confusion and disorientation, and visual sensitivity to light (photophobia). The symptoms of pneumococcal bacteremia may be similar to some of the symptoms of pneumonia and meningitis, along with joint pain and chills.

### Prevention

There is a vaccine to protect adults against invasive pneumococcal disease. The vaccine is safe and effective. A single dose of the pneumococcal vaccine protects against 23 different types of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria that are responsible for some 75 percent of all pneumococcal disease cases in adults.

### Who should get pneumococcal vaccine?

- People who are 65 years of age or older.
- People 2 years of age or older who have a chronic illness such as cardiovascular or pulmonary (lung) disease, sickle cell disease, diabetes, alcoholism, chronic liver diseases, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leaks or a cochlear implant.
- People 2 years of age or older with a weakened immune system due to illnesses such as HIV infection, AIDS, chronic renal failure, nephrotic syndrome, organ or bone marrow transplantation, Hodgkin's disease, leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, generalized malignancy; those receiving immunosuppressive therapy (e.g., steroids), and those who have had their spleen removed or whose spleen is dysfunctional due to an illness such as sickle cell disease.
- People 2–64 years of age who are living in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities.
- People 19–64 years of age who smoke cigarettes or have asthma.

### Vaccine Safety

The pneumococcal vaccine is safe and effective in preventing illness and death due to pneumococcal disease. Some people experience mild side effects, but these are usually minor and last only a short time. When side effects do occur, the most common include swelling and soreness at the injection site. A few people experience fever and muscle pain. As with any medicine, there are very small risks that serious problems could occur after getting the vaccine. However, the potential risks associated with pneumococcal disease are much greater than the potential risks associated with the pneumococcal vaccine. You cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine.

## Facts About Pneumococcal Disease

- FACT** Invasive pneumococcal disease can be prevented with a safe, effective vaccine.
- FACT** You cannot get pneumococcal disease from the vaccine.
- FACT** Pneumococcal vaccine is fully covered by Medicare Part B if the healthcare provider accepts the Medicare-approved amount.
- FACT** Pneumococcal vaccine can be given at any time during the year.
- FACT** Pneumococcal vaccine can be given at the same time as influenza vaccine, but in the opposite arm.
- FACT** Each year in the U.S., pneumococcal disease accounts for about 40,000 cases of invasive disease.
- FACT** Only 64% of non-institutionalized adults 65 years of age or older, and less than 37% of adults in other recommended high-risk groups have received the pneumococcal vaccine.
- FACT** A single dose of pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for most persons. Some people who were younger than 65 when they received the pneumococcal vaccine may need a second dose at 65 years of age or later.

Resource: National Foundation for Infectious Diseases



Kids can learn about health and hygiene and become members of the Scrub Club™ at [www.scrubclub.org](http://www.scrubclub.org). The site features a fun and educational animated Webisode with seven "soaper-heros" who battle nasty villains who represent germs and bacteria. Kids learn the six key steps to proper handwashing through a webisode, handwashing song, interactive games and activities.



**GET VACCINATED...**

It's National Influenza Vaccination Week  
[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

The banner features a collage of four photos: a man, a woman, a pregnant woman, and a doctor.

**National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW)** is a national observance that was established to highlight the importance of continuing influenza vaccination, as well as fostering greater use of flu vaccine after the holiday season into January and beyond. The 2010–2011 season's NIVW is scheduled for **Dec. 5–11, 2010**.

## COLD OR THE FLU?

### How to Tell the Difference Between a Cold and the Flu

The cold and flu are both respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different types of viruses. Flu symptoms usually come on quickly (within 3–6 hours) and consist of a fever, body aches, dry cough and extreme tiredness. Cold symptoms are less severe, and people experience a stuffy nose, productive cough, slight tiredness and limited body aches.

### Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Whether you need to know the answer now or you're looking into it for future purposes, we can help. Use the table below as a quick reference to determine if what you have is just a cold—or if it's the flu. If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, it is better to act fast and speak to your doctor within 12 to 48 hours.

## Symptoms at a Glance

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Usually Present
Aches	Slight	Usual, often severe
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly common
Tiredness	Mild	Moderate to severe
Sudden Symptoms	Symptoms appear gradually	Symptoms can appear within 3–6 hours
Coughing	Hacking, productive cough	Dry, unproductive cough
Sneezing	Common	Uncommon
Stuffy nose	Common	Uncommon
Sore throat	Common	Uncommon
Chest Discomfort	Mild to moderate	Often severe
Headache	Uncommon	Common

And remember, if it is the flu, it's important to know your treatment and prevention options so you can be prepared.

**DISCLAIMER:** This is not a substitute for a professional, on-site medical diagnosis. Visit your doctor or other healthcare professional for an accurate diagnosis of the flu or cold.

Genentech USA, Inc., [www.flufacts.com](http://www.flufacts.com)