

## END INFLUENZA:

The flu ends with you!  
Protect yourself and  
those you love.

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If you get the flu, it does not just affect your health. You may expose family, friends and co-workers to an infection that kills an average of 36,000 people annually in the United States. It is very important to be vaccinated each year to prevent this disease. Talk to your health care provider about flu vaccine for you and your family.

# VACCINES

## YOUR BEST SHOT AT PREVENTION

If you have questions, please call your health care provider or the Iowa Department of Public Health at

1-800-831-6293

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON VACCINES AND DISEASES, PLEASE VISIT:

<https://idph.iowa.gov/immtb/immunization>  
[www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org) • [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)  
[www.vaccine.chop.edu](http://www.vaccine.chop.edu) • [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

# INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION



**IOWA  
IMMUNIZATION  
PROGRAM**



# WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. The flu usually comes on suddenly and may cause a cough, fever, chills, sore throat, muscle or body aches, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and fatigue. Some people also have vomiting and diarrhea; however, this is more common in children than adults. The flu is different from a cold or stomach or intestinal disease, which can be caused by many different viruses or bacteria.

The flu can cause mild to severe illness and, at times, can lead to death. Most people who get influenza will recover in a few days to less than two weeks. Some people, such as older people, young children and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year.

## HOW DOES THE FLU SPREAD?

The flu can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes, spreading respiratory droplets to other people. Less often, a person also might get the flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

You may pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick or while you are sick. Most healthy adults are able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, are able to infect others for an even longer time.

## HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY?

Receiving the influenza vaccine each year is the best way to prevent influenza and its complications. Annual vaccination is recommended since the flu strains may change each year, and the vaccine changes to match the current strains.

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There are additional things you can do to protect yourself and your family:

- **Wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**
  - **Cover your cough or sneeze with your upper sleeve. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use.**
  - **Stay home from work or school when you are ill.**
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## WHEN SHOULD I BE VACCINATED?

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September, or as soon as vaccine is available, and continue throughout the flu season. It is never too late to vaccinate. The flu season can begin as early as October and generally peaks in January, February or later.

## CAN THE FLU VACCINE CAUSE THE FLU?

The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu. Having symptoms consistent with the flu does not always mean you have the flu. There are other illnesses affecting the nose, throat and lungs that cause flu-like symptoms.

## WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED?

Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu vaccine each year. By receiving the flu vaccine, you are protecting yourself and those around you. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that certain people get vaccinated — either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications. It is important for health care workers to receive the flu vaccine each year to protect themselves and their patients.

## PEOPLE AT A HIGHER RISK OF COMPLICATIONS FROM THE FLU

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people). Serious problems from influenza can happen at any age, but some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease), pregnant women and young children.