

# Rexall<sup>TM/AC</sup> FluShot

## The Facts About The Flu

### Protect yourself: Know the facts about the flu

#### Influenza is much worse than a bad cold.

Commonly known as “the flu”, influenza is an infection in the airways caused by the influenza virus. The flu is easily caught and easily spread. Although some symptoms may be cold-like (see comparison chart below), they are far more serious: headache, chills and dry cough are rapidly joined by body aches and fever. While the fever declines on the second or third day of the illness, full recovery may take up to 6 weeks.

Symptom	Cold	Influenza
Fever	Rare	Usual, high fever (102 F / 39C - 104F / 40C), sudden onset, lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Usual, can be severe
General aches & pains	Sometimes, mild	Usual, often severe
Fatigue and weakness	Sometimes, mild	Usual, severe, may last 2-3 weeks or more
Extreme fatigue	Unusual	Usual, early onset, can be severe
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Common
Chest discomfort, coughing	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Usual, can become severe
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, can worsen, a current chronic condition, can be life-threatening
Prevention	Frequent hand-washing	Annual vaccination and frequent hand-washing

#### Influenza can lead to severe complications for thousands each year.

While most people recover fully, influenza may lead to more severe and life-threatening illnesses, such as pneumonia, resulting in hospitalization and even death. Vaccination is the only preventative measure that has been proven to reduce mortality rates caused by influenza.

#### Immunization is the best prevention.

It's true! While a good diet, vitamins and exercise all contribute to your general health, they may not be enough to protect you from the influenza virus, especially if you already have a medical condition. Vaccination every fall does provide increased protection. Numerous studies show that immunization is effective in preventing the flu in all segments of the population. Furthermore, it reduces the seriousness of the disease should you contract it. The flu shot is recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization for anyone who wants protection from influenza. For medical reasons, some people should not get a flu shot (see reverse) – otherwise anyone over the age of 6 months can be immunized. For the following people it is especially important to get a flu shot:

- Anyone with chronic heart or lung disease
- Anyone with diabetes or other metabolic disease, cancer, kidney disease, a blood disorder or a weakened immune system
- Anyone 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term treatment with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- Seniors and anyone who lives, works or volunteers in a nursing home, chronic care facility, retirement home or other health care setting
- Emergency service workers including fire, police and ambulance staff
- Anyone traveling to places where the flu virus is likely circulating
- Anyone, including children, who lives in the same household or is in contact with people at risk such as those mentioned above

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## Some people should NOT get a flu shot.

Influenza vaccine should not be given to people who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose or developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome within six weeks of influenza vaccination. It may be given to people who have an egg allergy; however if they had an anaphylactic reaction with respiratory or cardiovascular symptoms, they should get their vaccine in a medical clinic, allergy office or hospital. Children who are under 6 months of age should not be given the vaccine because it does not work well in this age group. If you have a fever on the day you are supposed to receive your flu shot, you will need to reschedule it and wait until the fever is gone.

## Immunization side effects are minor.

Most commonly, mild soreness at the vaccination site is the only side effect. Less common are headaches and muscle pain. As a precaution, you will be asked to remain for 15 - 20 minutes following vaccination.

## Flu vaccine can't give you the flu.

The flu vaccine must meet the very highest standards. In order to offer you the most effective protection, the vaccine must contain part of the virus itself – the virus is inactivated in the injection and cannot give you the flu. The nasal spray contains a weakened version of the virus and should only be given to people with a healthy immune system. While they may experience mild side effects, such as a runny, stuffy nose, the nasal spray will not cause the flu.

## New flu strains mean a new vaccine each year.

Each year the World Health Organization identifies the particular strains of the flu the new vaccine must protect against. The vaccine is then produced to be most effective against those strains. Each year, you need to receive the new vaccine to be effectively protected against influenza.

## You should get immunized when the season heats up.

October to April is flu season. Get immunized in time. It takes 2 weeks for immunity to develop. Take preventive steps; the best protection is immunization. Remember, your last year's flu vaccination won't protect you this year.

## Children and youth who are at risk need a flu shot.

Some children and youth are also at risk of serious complication from influenza. Children who are at risk include those with chronic heart or lung disease such as asthma or cystic fibrosis, as well as children who take acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin) on a daily basis. Certain other serious medical conditions also require annual flu vaccinations. Talk to your health care professional about the influenza vaccine.

## Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding can get the flu shot.

Influenza vaccine is considered safe and may be beneficial for pregnant women at all stages of pregnancy and for breastfeeding mothers. Speak to your health care professional for further information.

The flu shot is the most effective and longest lasting protection against the influenza virus and the illness it can cause. As people are vaccinated, the influenza virus has less chance to multiply and circulate. Protecting yourself can also benefit those around you who may be at risk of severe complication from influenza.

There are so many reasons why it makes sense to get immunized – ask your health care professional about it today.

## Protect yourself, get the flu shot.

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