



News Release

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MULTIMEDIA ALERT: For audio and video of Vandana Bhide, M.D., talking about the flu and flu vaccinations, visit the [Mayo Clinic News Network](#).

Flu Update: Mayo Clinic Experts Encourage Flu Vaccinations, Dispel Common Myths Vaccination Options Are Available for Everyone

Jacksonville, FL — Flu season is upon us, and despite what most people think, influenza is a serious and potentially deadly disorder. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) estimate that an average of 30,000 deaths occur annually as a result of flu and associated complications. With last year's flu outbreak ranking among the worst in recent history, Mayo Clinic experts offer advice and dispel many misconceptions about the flu to help people stay healthy.

"The vaccine is the best defense against flu and serious flu-related conditions, and because it's difficult to predict how and when the flu will strike, I recommend getting it as early as you can," says [Teresa Seville, M.D.](#), Infectious Diseases, Mayo Clinic in Arizona.

[Vandana Bhide, M.D.](#), internal medicine specialist at [Mayo Clinic in Florida](#), advises everyone to consider a [flu shot](#), particularly those at high risk for complications — individuals over the age of 65, pregnant women, children 6 months to two years, and individuals with chronic medical disorders or who are immune-compromised. "Though many people who get the flu will have fever, muscle aches and need to stay home from work or school for a few days, certain people can develop serious complications, which could include pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and other conditions. The vaccine can help avoid these issues."

This year, there are several [new options for vaccination](#), including a shot and nasal spray with four strains of influenza rather than the traditional three strains. A high-dose vaccine for the elderly

is also available as well as a new vaccine without egg proteins, for those with egg allergies. “There is an option for everyone,” says Dr. Bhide.

One of the most common myths about the flu is that the vaccine will cause the flu. “Although many people believe this, it is a myth,” says [Jennifer White, M.D.](#), family medicine physician at [Mayo Clinic Health System in Springfield](#), Minn. “Injectable flu vaccines are composed of portions of inactivated flu proteins, and it’s impossible for them to cause the flu. Nasal spray vaccines have live, weakened flu organisms that can’t multiply or cause disease.”

Dr. White adds that pregnant women are encouraged to use the injectable vaccines as the nasal sprays have not yet been studied in pregnant women.

“In general, the best way to avoid getting sick with the flu is by getting vaccinated and practicing healthy habits,” says Dr. Seville.

Here are some tips for avoiding illness:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with water and soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This is particularly important before leaving the bathroom, eating or touching your face. Dr. Seville says it doesn’t matter if you use cold, warm or hot water, but hot water may increase the chance of skin irritation. A good rule of thumb is to wash your hands for 20 seconds, about as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday.” Use a paper towel to shut off the faucet and open the door while in a public restroom. This will keep you from recontaminating your hands.
- Don’t smoke. In general, smoking makes you more susceptible to illness.
- Cover your cough with the crook of your elbow.
- Avoid others who are sick, and stay home from work or school if you are ill. Dr. Bhide recommends visiting the doctor if you are part of the high risk group for flu or around someone who is at risk.
- Keep your vaccines up to date. Aside from the seasonal flu shot, the most important vaccines include measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and the relatively new Tdap, for tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis (whooping cough).

For more information about preventing the flu, please visit mayoclinic.com.

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