

**New Jersey Department of Health**  
**January 14, 2013**  
**Time: 3:00 pm**

**2012-2013 Influenza Season**

**GENERAL FLU INFORMATION**

**What is influenza (also called flu)?**

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

**What are the signs and symptoms of the flu?**

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

*\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

**How does the flu spread?**

Flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

**When are people contagious?**

You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days **after** becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

**How serious is the flu?**

Flu is unpredictable and how severe it is can vary widely from one season to the next depending on many things, including:

- what flu viruses are spreading,
- how much flu vaccine is available
- when vaccine is available
- how many people get vaccinated, and
- how well the flu vaccine is matched to flu viruses that are causing illness.

Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu. This includes older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and persons who live in facilities like nursing homes. Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.

### **What are some complications of flu?**

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

### **How is the ‘flu season’ defined?**

Based on trend analysis of influenza seasons in New Jersey over the past five years, influenza and/ or influenza-like illness (ILI) have been confirmed to be present during the months of November through to the end of March with the peak occurrence during January and February. However, cases of influenza can be seen at any time of the year.

## **FLU PREVENTION**

### **How can I prevent getting the flu?**

The following actions, promoted by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), will help to protect yourself and others during the peak of flu season: take time to get a flu vaccine; take everyday preventative actions to stop the spread of germs; and take flu antiviral drugs if your healthcare provider prescribes them.

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine as soon as the current season's vaccines are available.

Taking everyday preventative actions can help stop the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness, like flu. These measures include washing your hands, covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, avoiding close contact with sick people and staying home from work or school if you are sick. Those who do get the flu should stay home for at least 24 hours after a fever is gone except to get medical care. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

For more information about the “Take 3” actions to fight the flu, please visit the CDC webpage, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>

## **FLU VACCINE**

### **What is included in the 2012-2013 flu vaccine?**

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season.

The 2012-2013 influenza vaccine will protect against the following 3 viruses:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like;  
AND
- an A/Victoria/361/2011/(H3N2)-like;  
AND
- a B/Wisconsin/1/2010-like (Yamagata lineage) antigens.

While the H1N1 virus used to make the 2012-2013 flu vaccine is the same virus that was included in the 2011-2012 vaccine, the recommended influenza H3N2 and B vaccine viruses are different from those in the 2011-2012 influenza vaccine for the Northern Hemisphere.

### **What types of flu vaccines are available?**

There are two types of flu vaccine available. The first is an inactivated (killed) vaccine given as a shot, which has been used for many years. It is also known as a trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV). The flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The second is a live, attenuated (weakened) vaccine, which is sprayed into the nose and was licensed in 2003. It is also known as a live, attenuated, influenza vaccine (LAIV). The brand name for the LAIV is FluMist™. The LAIV is not for everyone. LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 2 through 49 years of age who are not pregnant. Check with your health care provider to see if your child can receive the LAIV flu vaccine.

### **What is the intradermal flu shot?**

"Fluzone Intradermal®" was licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in the United States for the 2011-2012 flu season. The intradermal flu vaccine is a shot that is injected into the skin instead of the muscle. The intradermal shot uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot, and it requires less antigen to be as effective as the regular flu shot. Antigen is the part of the vaccine that helps your body build up protection against flu viruses. The intradermal vaccine has been approved by the FDA for use in adults 18 through 64 years of age.

For more information, please visit:

[http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa\\_intradermal-vaccine.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa_intradermal-vaccine.htm)

### **What is the high dose flu vaccine?**

Fluzone High-Dose is an influenza vaccine designed specifically for people 65 years and older. Fluzone High-Dose vaccines contain 4 times the amount of antigen (the part of the vaccine that prompts the body to make antibody) contained in regular flu shots. A higher dose of antigen in the vaccine is supposed to give older people a better immune response and therefore better protection against flu.

For more information, please visit:

[http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa\\_fluzone.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa_fluzone.htm)

### **Why do I need to receive a flu vaccine every year?**

A flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing. It's not unusual for new flu viruses to appear each year. The flu vaccine is formulated each year to keep up with the flu viruses as they change.

In addition, multiple studies conducted over different seasons and across vaccine types and influenza virus subtypes have shown that the body's immunity to influenza viruses (acquired

either through natural infection or vaccination) declines over time. Getting vaccinated each year provides the best protection against influenza throughout flu season.

**Does getting a flu vaccine early in the season mean that I will not be protected later in the season?**

No. Flu vaccination provides protection against the influenza strains contained in the seasonal vaccine for the entire season. Everyone six months of age and older should be vaccinated as soon as the flu vaccine becomes available.

**Can flu vaccines be given at the same time as other vaccines?**

Nasal mist (live) flu vaccines can be given at the same time as killed vaccines (e.g., pneumococcal or meningococcal vaccine) or any other live injectable vaccine (e.g., MMR, MMRV, varicella, yellow fever). If not given at the same time, nasal mist (live) flu vaccines and other live vaccines should be separated by at least 4 weeks. The injectable (killed) flu vaccine can be given at the same time as any other killed or live vaccine. Tell your health care provider if you received any other vaccines within the past month or plan to get any within the next month.

**Who should receive the flu vaccine?**

The CDC currently recommends everyone 6 months and older to receive a flu vaccine each year. The purpose of “Universal” flu vaccination in the U.S. is to expand protection against the flu to more people. 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.

Those who are at high risk for flu complications include:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives seem to be at higher risk of flu complications
- People who have medical conditions including:
  - Asthma (even if it’s controlled or mild)
  - Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury]
  - Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
  - Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
  - Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
  - Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
  - Kidney disorders
  - Liver disorders
  - Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)

- Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- People who are morbidly obese (Body Mass Index [BMI] of 40 or greater)

Other people for whom vaccination is especially important are:

- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - Health care workers
  - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
  - Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years of age with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children younger than 6 months of age (children younger than 6 months are at highest risk of flu-related complications but are too young to get vaccinated)

### **Use of the Nasal Spray Seasonal Flu Vaccine**

Vaccination with the nasal-spray flu vaccine is an option for healthy people 2 through 49 years of age who are not pregnant. Even people who live with or care for those in a high risk group (including health care workers) can get the nasal-spray flu vaccine as long as they are healthy themselves and are not pregnant. The one exception is health care workers who care for people with severely weakened immune systems who require a special protected hospital environment (like those who had a bone marrow transplant); these people should get the inactivated flu vaccine (flu shot).

### **Who should not be vaccinated against seasonal flu?**

Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. They include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- Children younger than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group).
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.
- People with a history of [Guillain-Barré Syndrome](#) (a severe paralytic illness, also called GBS) that occurred after receiving influenza vaccine and who are not at risk for severe illness from influenza should generally not receive vaccine. Tell your doctor if you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome. Your doctor will help you decide whether the vaccine is recommended for you.

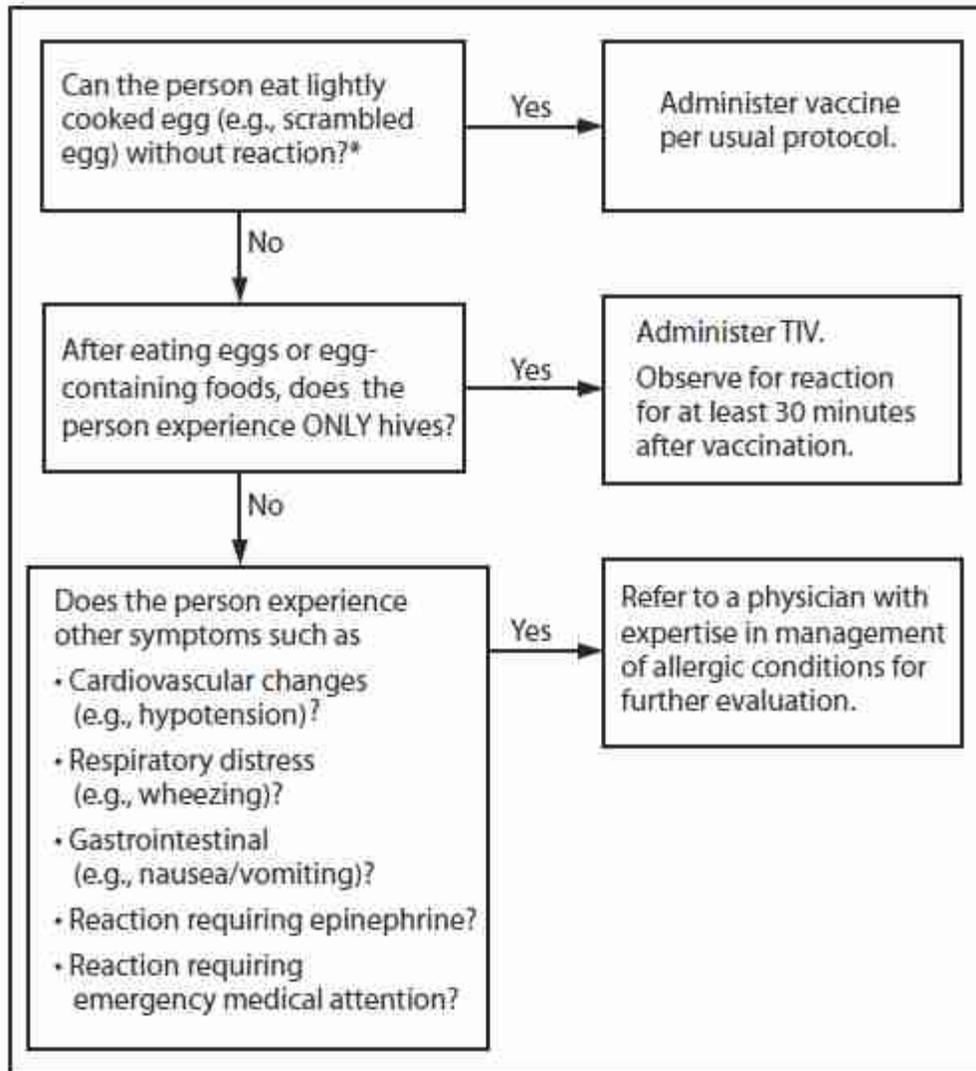
If you have questions about whether you should get a flu vaccine, consult your health care provider.

### **Can individuals with egg allergies now receive the flu vaccine?**

For the 2012-2013 season, there is a more permissive influenza vaccination recommendation for persons with egg allergies. Based on a thorough review of several recent studies, administration of trivalent flu vaccine has been tolerated by people with egg allergies, without serious reactions. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that for the 2012-2013 influenza season, people who have experienced only hives from consuming eggs can receive TIV intramuscularly as long as they are treated by a health care provider who is familiar with the potential manifestations of egg allergies and can be observed by a health care professional for at least 30 minutes after receiving each dose. LAIV (nasal spray) should not be used in these patients.

Additional information about vaccinating people with egg allergy is available in the 2012 ACIP recommendations, which can be accessed at [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6132a3.htm#egg\\_allergy](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6132a3.htm#egg_allergy). Health care providers should use the following algorithm when a patient reports allergy to eggs.

**Recommendations regarding influenza vaccination for persons who report allergy to eggs  
— Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, United States,  
2012–13 influenza season**



\* Persons with egg allergy might tolerate egg in baked products (e.g., bread or cake). Tolerance to egg-containing foods does not exclude the possibility of egg allergy. Please contact your health care provider for more information.

**Who should NOT get the nasal mist flu vaccine?**

The following people should receive the inactivated vaccine instead:

- Adults 50 years of age and older or children from 6 through 23 months of age (Children younger than 6 months should not get either influenza vaccine).
- Children younger than 5 years with asthma or one or more episodes of wheezing within the past year.
- Pregnant women
- Anyone with a long-term health problem such as:
  - Heart disease
  - Lung disease
  - Asthma
  - Kidney or liver disease
  - Metabolic disease such as diabetes
  - Anemia and other blood disorders
- Anyone with certain muscle or nerve disorders (such as cerebral palsy) that can lead to breathing or swallowing problems
- Anyone with a weakened immune system.
- Anyone in close contact with someone whose immune system is so weak they require care in a protected environment (such as a bone marrow transplant unit). Close contacts of other people with a weakened immune system (such as those with HIV) may receive LAIV. Healthcare personnel in neonatal intensive care units or oncology clinics may receive LAIV.
- Children or adolescents on long-term aspirin treatment

**Please note:**

Anyone with a nasal condition serious enough to make breathing difficult, such as a very stuffy nose, should get the flu shot instead.

**What if I experience a severe reaction after receiving the flu vaccine?**

If you suspect a severe side effect after receiving any type of vaccination, you may ask your health care provider to report the reaction to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), a national vaccine safety surveillance program co-sponsored by the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Anyone can file a VAERS report, including health care providers, manufacturers, and vaccine recipients. You can find information about submitting a VAERS report at the following website: <http://vaers.hhs.gov/esub/index>

**VACCINE AVAILABILITY**

As influenza (flu) activity continues to increase in New Jersey and nationwide, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) encourages individuals to receive the flu vaccine to help protect themselves and others. Since this flu season is off to an early start, providers may be experiencing difficulty with maintaining sufficient vaccine in stock. There are options available for providers who are trying to meet consumer demand:

- National Influenza Vaccine Summit: Providers may order vaccine from a list of commercial distributors and manufacturers provided by the National Influenza Vaccine

Summit, <http://www.preventinfluenza.org/> . For your convenience, this information is included as an attachment to this message.

- **Flu Vaccine Finder:** To find a nearby flu clinic, you may direct consumers to the Flu Vaccine Finder on the NJDOH website: <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/findflushot.shtml>
- **Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program:** VFC is a federally-funded, state-operated vaccine supply program that provides pediatric vaccines at no cost to doctors who serve children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay. Patients eligible to receive VFC vaccines are children who: are American Indian or Alaskan Native; are enrolled in Medicaid or Medicaid Managed Care; are enrolled in NJ FamilyCare (Plan A only); or are not covered by health insurance. “Underinsured” children who have health insurance that does not cover vaccination can receive VFC vaccines through Federally Qualified Health Centers or Rural Health Centers. NJ VFC providers can order flu vaccine at the following website: <https://njiis.nj.gov/njiis/html/vfc.html>

Parents who have difficulty locating vaccine for children younger than 18 years of age, may be able to access vaccine at local pharmacy walk-in medical clinics. Pharmacists are not permitted to vaccinate anyone under 18 years of age; however, CVS Minute Clinics are staffed with nurse practitioners and physician assistants who may be able to vaccinate the preschool/childcare population. Consumers should access the CVS Minute Clinic website for locations and detailed information about the populations these clinics serve: [www.minuteclinic.com](http://www.minuteclinic.com) .

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET THE FLU

### **What should I do if I get sick?**

Most people with the flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.

If, however, you have symptoms of flu and are very sick or worried about your illness, contact your health care provider (doctor, physician’s assistant, etc.). Certain people are at greater risk of serious flu-related complications (including young children, elderly persons, pregnant women and people with certain long-term medical conditions) and this is true both for seasonal flu and novel flu virus infections. (For a full list of people at higher risk of flu-related complications, see [People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications](#)). If you are in a high risk group and develop flu symptoms, it’s best for you to contact your doctor. Remind them about your high risk status for flu.

Health care providers will determine whether influenza testing and possible treatment are needed. Your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs that can treat the flu. These drugs work better for treatment the sooner they are started.

### **What are the emergency warning signs?**

#### In children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting

- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for any infant who has any of these signs:

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

#### In adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

#### **Do I need to go the emergency room if I am only a little sick?**

No. The emergency room should be used for people who are very sick. You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill. If you have the emergency warning signs of flu sickness, you should go to the emergency room. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications or you are concerned about your illness, call your health care provider for advice. If you go to the emergency room and you are not sick with the flu, you may catch it from people who do have it.

#### **Are there medicines to treat the flu?**

Yes. There are drugs your doctor may prescribe for treating the flu called “antivirals.” These drugs can make you better faster and may also prevent serious complications. See [Treatment - Antiviral Drugs](#) for more information. Early treatment is especially important for the elderly, the very young, people with certain chronic health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, chronic heart disease), and pregnant women. Check with your healthcare provider to see if you are a candidate for this medication and follow instructions for taking this medication.

#### **How long should I stay home if I’m sick?**

CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other things you have to do and no one else can do for you. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®.) You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

#### **What should I do while I’m sick?**

Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick. If you must leave home, for example to get medical care, wear a facemask if you have one, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. And wash your hands often to keep from spreading flu to others. For additional information, visit “The Flu: Caring for Someone Sick at Home” brochure on the CDC website: [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/influenza\\_flu\\_homecare\\_guide.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/influenza_flu_homecare_guide.pdf)