

Flu FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

2010-2011 Flu Vaccine

Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH)

Updated 9/7/2010

Additional Resources:

211 WNY (In Erie County, simply dial 211)

NYSDOH FAQs (www.health.state.ny.us)

CDC FAQs (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by [influenza viruses](#). It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. 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.

In 2009-2010, a new and very different flu virus (called [2009 H1N1](#)) spread worldwide causing the first flu pandemic in more than 40 years. During the 2010-2011 flu season, CDC expects the 2009 H1N1 virus to cause illness again along with other influenza viruses. **The [2010-2011 flu vaccine](#) will protect against 2009 H1N1 and two other influenza viruses.**

Q1. Where can I get vaccinated against the flu?

A1. The best place to receive the seasonal flu vaccine is from your health care provider. Please check with your health care provider to see if and when he/she will be offering flu vaccinations. If your provider will not be offering flu vaccinations, then consider getting vaccinated through one of the following agencies. You will find a list of community sites where seasonal flu vaccine may be offered at www.erie.gov/immunizewny or by calling the following agencies.

Note: Please call each agency for minimum age requirements for vaccination, payment issues and other questions.

- Catholic Health System (CHS) 716-447-6205
- Independent Nursing Care (INC) 716-805-1020
- Maxim Health Systems 877-962-9358
- Passport Health 716-204-0777
- Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) 716-630-8330

Q2. Who should be vaccinated against the flu?

A2. [Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine](#) as soon as vaccine is available this fall.

While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that the following groups 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:

1. Pregnant women
2. Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided herein and on the Erie County Department of Health website is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your personal physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of the content found on the Erie County Department of Health website or this correspondence.

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- Health care workers
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

As in previous recommendations, all children aged 6 months - 8 years who receive a seasonal influenza vaccine for the first time should receive 2 doses.

- Children who received only 1 dose of a seasonal influenza vaccine in the first influenza season that they received vaccine should receive 2 doses, rather than 1, in the following influenza season.
- For the 2010 – 2011 influenza season, children aged 6 months - 8 years who did not receive at least 1 dose of an influenza A (H1N1) 2009 monovalent vaccine should receive 2 doses of a 2010 – 2011 seasonal influenza vaccine, regardless of previous influenza vaccination history.
- Children aged 6 months - 8 years for whom the previous 2009 – 2010 seasonal or influenza A (H1N1) 2009 monovalent vaccine history cannot be determined should receive 2 doses of a 2010 – 2011 seasonal influenza vaccine.

Q3. Who Should Not Be Vaccinated against the flu?

A3. There are some people who should not get a flu vaccine without first consulting a physician. These include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine.
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group), and
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated.)

Q4. What flu viruses will the vaccine protect against?

A4. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against three different flu viruses: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season.

Q5. When should I get vaccinated against the flu?

A5. As soon as vaccine is available this Fall.

Q6. Does getting vaccinated against flu early in the season pose a risk that immunity may wane before the end of the season?

A6. No. Flu vaccination provides protection against the influenza strains contained in the seasonal vaccine for the entire season. Vaccination can begin as soon as vaccine becomes available.

Q7. Does flu vaccine work right away?

A7. No. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. In the meantime, you are still at risk for getting the flu. That's why it's better to get vaccinated early in the fall, before the flu season really gets under way.

Q8. Is there more than one kind of flu vaccine?

A8. There are two types of vaccines:

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- **The "flu shot"** - an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.
- **The nasal-spray flu vaccine** - a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "live attenuated influenza vaccine" or FluMist®). LAIV (FluMist®) is approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

Q9. What actions can I take to protect myself and my family against the flu this season?

A9. CDC recommends a yearly [flu vaccine](#) as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

In addition, you can take everyday preventive steps such as

- Getting vaccinated against the flu
- Washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs
- Staying away from sick people
- If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading influenza to others.

Q10. What should I do if I get sick?

A10. If you get sick with flu-like symptoms you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care. Call your health care provider if you are concerned about your health.

Anyone with the following emergency warning signs should get medical care right away.

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 adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting