

Seasonal Influenza shots are now available at Greenwich Pediatric Associates. Please call to make an appointment for your child to receive the recommended vaccination. Greenwich Pediatrics, as well as the CDC and AAP recommend that all children older than 6 months receive the vaccination. Parents and caregivers of children younger than 6 months should also receive the flu shot. We expect to have more information about the H1N1 vaccination soon so please stay tuned.

The information below is from the Center for Disease Control. Visit their website www.cdc.gov or ask any of our doctors or nurses for more information about the seasonal and H1N1 influenza vaccines.

Flu activity is increasing in parts of the United States. So far, most flu is 2009 H1N1 (sometimes called "swine flu"). CDC is preparing for an early flu season and expects both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu to circulate, causing illness, hospital stays and deaths.

Seasonal flu, also called influenza, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent seasonal flu is by getting a seasonal flu vaccination each year.

While the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus (sometimes called "swine flu") has been the focus of attention since the spring, it is important that we do not forget the risks posed by seasonal influenza viruses.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population get the flu;

- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from seasonal flu complications, including 20,000 children; and

- About 36,000 people die from seasonal flu.

Preventing Seasonal Flu: Get Vaccinated

The single best way to protect against seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. The 2009–10 seasonal flu vaccine is now available. Fall is the best time to get vaccinated, but getting vaccinated later in the flu season—in December, January, and beyond—still provides protection, as flu season normally peaks in January or later.

Seasonal flu vaccines will not provide protection against 2009 H1N1 influenza. The 2009 H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and initial doses of licensed vaccine are expected to be available by mid-October. Seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day, with the exception that persons who wish to receive live nasal-spray vaccines for both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 influenza. They will need to

receive those vaccines at least 4 weeks apart.

The usual seasonal influenza viruses are still expected to cause illness this fall and winter. Individuals are encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine now and their 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available.

The seasonal flu vaccine takes about two weeks to provide protection from the seasonal flu. The vaccine does not provide protection against non-flu viruses that can cause colds and other respiratory illnesses.

In addition to getting a vaccination, good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

Who Should Get the Seasonal Flu Vaccine?

In general, anyone who wants to reduce the chances of getting the flu can and should get vaccinated every year. Annual vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or people who live with or care for high-risk individuals. The groups recommended for a yearly seasonal flu vaccination differ from the groups recommended for the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

People who are at high risk for complications from seasonal flu should get a seasonal flu vaccine each year are:

- Children 6 months through 18 years of age,
- Pregnant women,
- People 50 years of age and older,
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, and
- 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 seasonal flu should get a seasonal flu vaccine each year are:

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

Types of Vaccines:

There are two types of seasonal vaccine available.

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, and pregnant women.

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 (without asthma or other underlying illnesses) 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

Symptoms of Flu

Symptoms of seasonal flu can include:

Fever

Headache

Extreme tiredness

Dry cough

Sore throat

Runny or stuffy nose

Muscle aches

Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

These symptoms are usually referred to as "flu-like symptoms."

Complications of Flu

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

How Flu Spreads

Flu viruses spread from person to person mainly when infected individuals cough or sneeze. Sometimes people might become infected by touching an object with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Most healthy adults can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means you might be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Cleaning your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based product and also covering your cough with a tissue or your sleeve will help prevent the spread of influenza.