

Older Adults Influenza (Flu) Fact Sheet

What is the flu?

- The "flu" or influenza is caused by a virus.
- The flu can cause serious complications like pneumonia or death.
- It is very contagious and spreads in the U.S. each year from fall to spring.
- Older adults and young children are at highest risk but anyone can get it.

How is influenza spread?

- Influenza spreads from person to person by droplets from coughing, sneezing or close contact.

What are the symptoms?

- Flu symptoms typically start 1-4 days after a person is exposed to the flu.
- Symptoms may include:
 - Fever or feeling feverish/chills
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - Tiredness

What you should know if you are 65 years or older:

- Adults 65 years and older are at greater risk of serious complications from the flu because immune defenses weaken with age.
- For people with health problems, such as heart disease, lung disease, asthma, or diabetes, the risk of complications is higher.
- Most flu-related deaths and hospitalizations occur in people 65 years and older.

Actions people 65 years and older should take this flu season:

- Get your flu shot. While the flu vaccine varies in how well it works, vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting against the flu.
- Vaccination is especially important for people 65 years and older because they are at high risk for complications from flu.
- Getting your flu vaccine helps to protect your children, grandchildren, and those around you from getting the flu.

What should I know about the flu vaccine?

- The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine every year. ODH recommends that you consult with your doctor to determine whether vaccination is appropriate for you or a family member.
- Flu vaccines are updated every year and your immunity wanes over a year, so annual vaccination is needed to ensure the best possible protection.
- You can get vaccinated throughout the flu season from September until January or even later.
- People 65 years and older can get any injectable vaccine (flu shot) that is approved for use in that age group.
- There are two vaccines specifically for people 65 and older - Fluzone® High Dose and FLUAD™ - that are designed to create a stronger immune response.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

- Contact your doctor to see if the flu vaccine is available. You can also contact your local health department and check the following website for a location in your area: <https://vaccinefinder.org/>