



2010/2011 Flu Vaccine

Why does a person need a flu vaccine every year?

Each year a new flu vaccine is created to protect against the top 3 strains or types of flu that are expected to be circulating for that season. There are many strains of flu and flu viruses are constantly changing. Since the strains change each year a person needs to get a flu vaccine each year to be fully protected against the strains that are expected to be going around for that particular year.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

Anyone 6 months of age or older should get a flu vaccine. The flu **shot** is available to anyone 6 months of age and older, while those over 2 years and under 49 years of age may be able to get the flu **mist**. Check with your health care provider about which type of flu vaccine is right for you.

Are there going to be two different flu vaccines that people will need to get this year?

No, there will only be one flu vaccine this year, the seasonal flu vaccine.

Is the 2009 H1N1 flu strain going to be in the seasonal flu vaccine this year?

Yes, the 2009 H1N1 flu strain is expected to circulate and will be included in the seasonal vaccine this year. Also, the vaccine will protect against an influenza A virus (H3N2) and an influenza B virus.

Do I need to get a flu vaccine this year if I got the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine last year?

Yes, the seasonal flu vaccine this year will include the 2009 H1N1 flu strain and also two other strains that are likely to circulate. Therefore, in order to be fully protected against flu this season you will need to have a vaccine to protect against all 3 strains.

Do I need to get a flu vaccine this year if I was sick with 2009 H1N1 flu last year?

In general, after you recover from flu you are protected against that one strain of flu but since there are many other strains, it is possible to get flu again. Therefore, it is important to a flu vaccine which will protect against all 3 strains that are likely to be circulating.

Will I have too much H1N1 flu vaccine if I get the seasonal flu vaccine this year?

No, it is common for the same or a similar strain to be offered in the flu vaccine the following year. A person will not have an "overdose" of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine if they get the seasonal flu vaccine this year and had a 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine or was sick with 2009 H1N1 flu last year.

Will a person have better immunity if they get the flu rather than the vaccine?

A person will gain immunity against flu after getting a vaccine or in some cases after they recover from the flu. But, it is important to remember that flu can cause very serious illness in some people. The risk from getting a vaccine is much less than the risk of getting sick with the flu.

Can a person get flu from the flu vaccine?

No, the flu vaccine cannot give you the flu. It does, however, take two weeks for the vaccine to provide full protection against the flu, so it is very important to use other prevention methods such as washing your hands and staying away from those who are sick even after you have had a flu vaccine. Also, since cold and flu season are at the same time, it is sometimes easy for people to think they have the flu when really they have another illness such as a cold.

**For more information, please contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Communicable Disease Control
(617) 534-5611 or www.bphc.org**