

## What to Expect for the 2024-25 Flu Season

*This WorkCare Fact sheet discusses the 2024-25 influenza season, flu vaccine and workplace infectious disease prevention.*

Influenza, a contagious respiratory illness, is annually associated with local sickness outbreaks and disruptive work and school absences. Flu tends to spread more rapidly during the winter in cold, dry conditions when there is less sunlight and people spend more time indoors.

### Vaccination

Flu vaccination is the first line of defense recommended by public health officials. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual flu vaccination for children over age 6 months, adolescents and all adults unless there is a condition that precludes it. The CDC estimates that influenza vaccination prevented about 6 million illnesses, 65,000 hospitalizations and 3,700 deaths during the 2023-24 season.

Vaccination helps prevent the spread of illness to family members, co-workers and vulnerable populations such as the elderly, infants and people with medical conditions who have a higher risk of serious complications such as pneumonia. The more people who get vaccinated, the greater the protection afforded to everyone.

Vaccine composition is based on strains that predominate during alternating flu seasons in the northern and southern hemisphere, as well as research on emerging strains. The 2024-25 trivalent (three component) flu vaccine targets three viruses. The formula is determined based on case rates in the southern hemisphere and ongoing research on various strains in circulation.

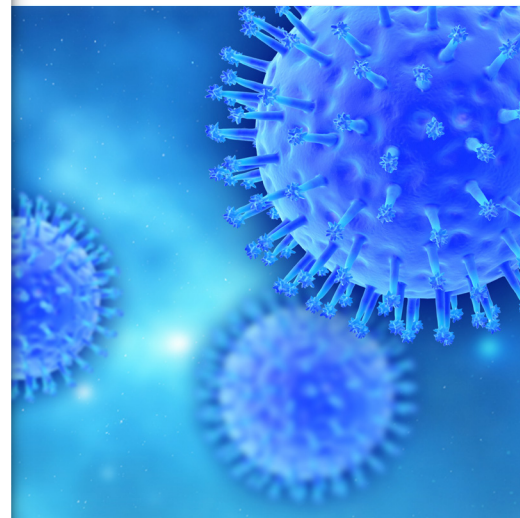
The vaccine causes protective antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. Although any type of vaccine is not 100 percent preventive, getting vaccinated can reduce illness duration and severity. Refer to [Key Facts about Seasonal Flu Vaccine](#) to learn about vaccination options and contraindications.

### Symptoms and Treatment

Most people who get the flu have mild-to-moderate illness and recover on their own, but influenza can cause serious complications and death in vulnerable populations.

Symptoms may include fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose or congestion, achiness, headache and fatigue. Some people, especially children, may have vomiting and diarrhea. It's advisable to get tested for COVID-19 because many, but not all, symptoms are similar to the flu.

Flu remedies include rest, staying hydrated and eating nourishing foods. Over-the-counter medications are available to help relieve symptoms. Antiviral drugs may be prescribed in certain cases to treat symptoms and shorten illness duration.



Studies show that antiviral drugs work best for treatment when started within two days of getting sick, although starting them later can still be helpful. Flu antiviral drugs are not used to treat COVID-19.

Most people who get the flu recover within five days to two weeks. Some people may develop sinus and ear infections, and in serious cases, pneumonia, inflammation of the heart, brain or muscles, or organ failure.

## More About Prevention

Along with vaccination, contagious disease prevention measures employers can recommend to employees include:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water
- Using hand sanitizer when water is not available
- Covering coughs and sneezes and throwing tissues away
- Disinfecting shared objects and communal areas
- Not touching one's nose, mouth and eyes
- Staying home when ill and avoiding others who are sick
- Wearing a mask, especially when in public places

Employers can promote flu prevention with campaigns and onsite vaccination. WorkCare supports onsite flu shot events and referrals to qualified local providers.

## Legal Considerations

Employers have the right to establish health and safety rules that are job-related and consistent with business necessity. This includes requiring immunizations that protect against the spread of infectious illnesses. Employers who require vaccinations are expected to engage in an interactive process to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including exemptions for medical necessity or religious beliefs.

State laws require health care facilities to ensure consenting employees receive influenza vaccines. In some workplaces, infectious disease management includes mandatory use of personal protective equipment such as gloves, gown, mask, eye protection, face shield and safe injection practices. Surgical masks or respirators may be used to help reduce the spread of disease via airborne or droplet contamination.

*WorkCare's subject matter experts provide guidance on contagious disease prevention and management in the workplace, including return-to-work recommendations. Our Onsite Services & Clinics team provides flu and COVID-19 shots at client locations and facilitates referrals to qualified local providers. Contact us to learn more: [info@workcare.com](mailto:info@workcare.com).*

## Flu Vaccine FAQs

**Q:** When is the best time to get a flu shot?

**A:** September and October are considered optimal, but later-season vaccination is not too late to help prevent illness.

**Q:** What are determining factors for the kind of vaccine a person should get?

**A:** Factors that can determine a person's suitability for vaccination, or vaccination with a particular vaccine, include their age, health status and allergies.

**Q:** Will the vaccine give me the flu?

**A:** No. Mild symptoms may occur while the body develops antibodies that provide protection against viral infections, but it is not a contagious illness.

**Q:** Why is a flu shot recommended annually?

**A:** A person's immune protection wanes over time and vaccine composition is adjusted each year based on viruses in circulation.