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VACCINE INFORMATION STATEMENT

Influenza Vaccine

What You Need to Know

1 Why get vaccinated?

Influenza ("flu") is a contagious illness that spreads around the United States every winter, usually between October and May.

Flu is caused by influenza viruses, and it spreads mainly by coughing, sneezing, and close contact.

Anyone can get flu, but the risk of getting flu is highest among children. Symptoms come on suddenly and may last several days. They can include:

- fever/chills
- sore throat
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- cough
- headache
- runny or stuffy nose

Flu can make some people much sicker than others. These people include young children, people 65 and older, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions—such as heart, lung, or kidney disease, nervous system disorders, or a weakened immune system. Flu vaccination is especially important for these people, and anyone in close contact with them.

Flu can also lead to pneumonia, and make existing medical conditions worse. It can cause diarrhea and seizures in children.

Each year thousands of people in the United States die from flu, and many more are hospitalized.

The vaccine is the best protection against flu and its complications. The vaccine also helps prevent spreading flu from person to person.

2 Inactivated and recombinant flu vaccines

You are getting an injectable flu vaccine, which is either an "inactivated" or "recombinant" vaccine. These vaccines do not contain any live influenza virus. They are given by injection with a needle, and often called the "flu shot."

A different, live, attenuated (weakened) influenza vaccine is sprayed into the nostrils. This vaccine is described in a separate Vaccine Information Statement.

(Flu Vaccine, Inactivated or Recombinant) 2014-2015

Read This Vaccine Information Statement and your child's health care provider's instructions carefully. There is information about vaccine safety and other things you should know before your child's vaccination.

The vaccination is recommended every year. Some children 6 months through 8 years of age might need two doses during one year.

The viruses are always changing. Each year's flu vaccine is made to protect against 3 or 4 viruses that are likely to cause disease that year. The vaccine cannot prevent all cases of flu, but it is the best defense against the disease. It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after the vaccination, and protection lasts several months to a year.

Some illnesses that are not caused by influenza virus are often mistaken for flu. The vaccine will not prevent these illnesses. It can only prevent influenza.

Some inactivated flu vaccines contain a very small amount of a mercury-based preservative called thimerosal. Studies have shown that thimerosal in vaccines is not harmful, but the vaccines that do not contain a preservative are available.

3 Some people should not get this vaccine

Tell the person who gives you the vaccine:

- if you have any serious, life-threatening allergies, if you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of flu vaccine, or have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, including (for example) an allergy to gelatin, antibiotics, or eggs; you may be advised not to get vaccinated. Most, but not all, types of flu vaccine contain a small amount of egg protein.
- if you ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (a serious paralyzing illness, also called GBS); some people with a history of GBS should not get this vaccine. This should be discussed with your doctor.
- if you are not feeling well. It is usually okay to get the vaccine when you have a mild illness, but you might be advised to wait until you feel better. You should come back when you are better.