

Flu Shots at Madison Family Clinic

Just as winter and spring come every year, so does flu season. The typical flu season occurs from fall to early spring, impacting between 5 to 20 percent of the U.S. population.

Although the length and severity of an epidemic may vary, and some lucky individuals may get through flu-free, we can always expect to be surrounded by sneezing, coughing, and fevers for a few months out of every year.

We all know how disappointing it is to experience the flu, especially around the holidays. Coughing, fever, headache, sore throat, and runny nose are enough to keep you bed ridden for a week or more. So, if you are worried about missing out on holidays, celebrations, family events, social life, or work, take the easy precaution of getting a flu vaccination.

How does the flu shot work?

The flu virus changes and adapts every year, which is why it is so widespread and so difficult to avoid. To keep up with these rapid changes, new vaccines are created and released every year.

Also every year, federal health experts predict which three strains of the flu are most likely to thrive in order to determine which to include in the vaccine. After a vaccination, the immune system produces antibodies to protect against viruses. Flu shots are the most effective method to protect against influenza and its complications.

Even if you feel that you don't need the vaccine, consider getting one to prevent exposing others, such as children and the elderly, to contaminated germs. Many infected individuals may be contagious even if they don't show signs and symptoms of influenza.

Who needs a flu shot?

While some may be more prone to infection than others, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months of age or older be vaccinated against influenza.

Workers in public settings have more risk of exposure to the disease, so it is very important that they receive a vaccination. Also, people who are in regular contact with at-risk people should also be vaccinated. Those people include:

- Teachers
- Day care employees
- Hospital workers
- Public workers
- Health care providers
- Employees of nursing homes and chronic-care facilities
- Home-care providers
- Emergency-response personnel
- Household members of people in those professions

Also, those who live in close quarters with others, such as college students and members of the military, are at a greater risk for exposure.

It is also important that those who are at a higher risk of acquiring the flu be vaccinated. Pregnant women, children between 6 months and 18 years of age, people over 50, anyone with chronic medical conditions, and anyone living in a nursing home are all urged to get a vaccine.

Chronic medical conditions that could increase your risk of complications include:

- Asthma
- Heart or lung problems
- HIV/AIDS
- Metabolic diseases
- Epilepsy
- sickle cell anemia
- obesity
- kidney or liver disease

Who shouldn't get a flu shot?

Some people should not get a flu shot. These include those who have had a bad reaction to the disease in the past, have an impaired immune system, are allergic to eggs or mercury, or have had a fever the day of the vaccination.

What are side effects to the flu vaccine?

Many people incorrectly assume that the flu vaccine could give you the flu, but flu shots are safe for most people. Although you cannot get the flu simply from the shot, occasionally people may experience flu-like symptoms within 24 hours of receiving the vaccine.

Possible side effects of the flu shot include:

- Low-grade fever
- Swollen, red, tender area around the vaccination spot
- Chills or headache

Symptoms are typically mild and go away within a day or two.

Flu shots are the single best way to protect against the flu, so if you want to reduce your risk of getting the flu, see one of the health care providers at Madison Family Clinic.