

ABOUT THE FLU VACCINE

In 2009-2010 there were two separate Influenza vaccines, one for “seasonal flu” and one for the pandemic H1N1 Influenza. This season, in 2010-11, those two vaccines have been combined, so there is only one vaccine for people to receive. Infants and children less than 8 years of age receiving flu vaccine for the first time may not respond as vigorously to the vaccine, so they need to receive two doses the first year they are vaccinated. Others need only one dose.

We recommend the Flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older, unless there is a very specific contraindication. Infants under age 2, the elderly, and patients with chronic medical problems such as diabetes and asthma have a high risk of complications from Influenza (including ear infections, pneumonia and death). Others, particularly school children and anyone working in the public sector, serve as a vector for the transmission of Influenza virus. If these potential vectors received the flu vaccine there would be less spread of the disease in our community and there would be fewer deaths and less illness from Influenza.

Yes, the flu vaccine is safe. It cannot cause Influenza.

The flu vaccine does not wear off. If you receive the vaccine early in the flu season, it still lasts for the entire season. However, since the flu virus changes from season to season there is a new vaccine each year. Immunity does not carry over from one season to the next.

There are some rare individuals who should not receive one or both forms of the flu vaccine.

Egg allergy: patients with known or suspected egg allergy must consult with an allergist before receiving any form of the flu vaccine, since it is prepared with egg cells

Patients who should not receive any flu vaccine at all :

- Patient who have, or have had, Guillain-Barre Syndrome

Patients who should not receive the live flu vaccine (the nasal spray) :

- Children or adolescents who are receiving aspirin or salicylates
- Patients with chronic heart conditions
- Patients with HIV infection
- Household contacts of patients with HIV infection
- Patients who are currently ill
- Patients with deficiencies of their immune system
- Household contacts of patients with immune deficiencies
- Pregnant women
- Anyone with recurrent wheezing or asthma
- Patients with diabetes
- Patients with sickle cell disease or other major abnormalities of hemoglobin
- Patients under age 2, or over age 49

Thimerisol is a preservative used in some forms of the Flu vaccine. There is no evidence at all that thimerisol (which contains trace amounts of mercury) causes any problems at all for children or adults.

There are two basic types of Influenza vaccine.

Flu Mist : This is a nose spray that is squirted in the nose. It is quickly inactivated by heat, so it does not cause influenza, and cannot be spread from one person to another. This can only be given to patients between two years of age and 49 years of age. It can NOT be given to patients with asthma or pulmonary problems.

Fluzone: This is an injectible form of the Flu vaccine. This has a killed virus, so it cannot cause influenza disease and it cannot be spread from one person to another. This vaccine can be given to anyone older than 6 months of age.

For children, there is a completely separate supply of the vaccine provided for the uninsured, for patients on Medicaid, for Native Americans, and for the rare cases where insurance does not cover the Flu Vaccine. This supply of Flu Vaccine comes from the **Vaccines for Children** program, otherwise known as **VFC Vaccine**.

To receive a flu vaccination, just call our office and get on our nurse's schedule. We have decided not to have a specific "flu clinic" at the Instacare this year. Swine flu is predicted to arrive in Utah the last of October, so it would be wise to get your vaccination early.

