



It's flu shot time: New nasal spray a recommended option for 2018-2019 flu season

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SPRINGFIELD – As soon as the influenza (flu) vaccine is available in your community, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recommends everyone six months and older be vaccinated. The nasal spray flu vaccine is once again a recommended option for influenza vaccination. During the past two flu seasons, the nasal spray was not recommended due to concern about its effectiveness.

“It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against flu to develop in the body,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “The flu season typically starts around October so we recommend you make plans to get vaccinated now, before flu season begins.”

Flu activity peaks between December and February, but activity can last as late as May. Flu is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause mild to severe illness. Serious cases of flu can result in hospitalization or death.

Getting an annual flu vaccine is the first and best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu. It can reduce flu illnesses, doctors’ visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. The more people who get vaccinated, the more people will be protected from flu, especially those who may not be able to be vaccinated, such as babies younger than six months. Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. Getting vaccinated is the first and most important step in protecting you and those around you against flu viruses.

Flu symptoms can include fever or feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, tiredness, and some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

Flu is typically spread by droplets when someone with the flu talks, coughs, or sneezes. People can also get the flu by touching something, like a door handle, that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

On average, it's about two days after being exposed to the flu before symptoms begin. However, you can pass the flu to someone roughly a day before you start experiencing those symptoms, and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.

In addition to getting a flu shot, IDPH recommends following the 3 C's: clean, cover, and contain.

- **Clean** – frequently wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- **Cover** – cover your cough and sneeze.
- **Contain** – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick.

Influenza antiviral drugs can be a second line of defense for treatment of some who get sick with the flu. Many observational studies have found that in addition to lessening the duration and severity of symptoms, antiviral drugs can prevent flu complications. Because it is important to start antiviral medication quickly, high-risk patients should contact a health care professional at the first signs of influenza symptoms, which include sudden onset of fever, aches, chills, and tiredness.

To find a location to get a flu shot in your community, check with your health care provider or local health department. You can also use the online [Vaccine Finder](#).