

# Diabetes and the Flu Shot



ALASKA NATIVE  
TRIBAL HEALTH  
CONSORTIUM

## Does my diabetes put me at risk of getting the flu?

Yes. People with diabetes are more likely to get the flu. A person with diabetes who gets the flu is more likely to die than a person without diabetes who gets the flu.

For these reasons, it is recommended that people with diabetes get the flu shot every year. An annual flu shot is part of the standards of care for a person with diabetes. The standards of care are a list of health screenings, tests and preventative steps, every person with diabetes should get to reduce their risk of developing complications related to diabetes.

### How does the flu shot work?

Each year, public health officials try to predict the most common strains of the flu that will affect Americans. The officials then produce a vaccine to be given before flu season that will fight those strains of flu. The flu shot works about 70-90 percent of the time.

### When should I get the flu shot?

It is recommended to get the flu shot as soon as it's available in the fall. This way you are protected throughout flu season. If you didn't get the vaccine in the fall, it is still better to get it in winter than not at all.

### Should my family get the flu shot?

Yes! Every member of your family over 6 months old should get the flu vaccine. The flu is contagious. If other members of your family are vaccinated against the flu, that reduces your risk of developing it.

## Can the flu shot give me the flu?

No, a flu shot cannot give you the flu. Flu vaccines that are given with a needle are currently made in two ways:

The vaccine is made either with:

- Flu vaccine viruses that have been 'inactivated' and are therefore not infectious, or
- With no flu vaccine viruses at all.

In studies, where some people got flu shots and others got saltwater shots, the only differences in symptoms were increased soreness in the arm and redness at the injection site among people who got the flu shot. There were no differences in terms of body aches, fever, cough, runny nose or sore throat.

What about people who get a seasonal flu vaccine and still get sick with flu-like symptoms?

There are several reasons why someone might get flu-like symptoms even after they have been vaccinated against the flu:

- People may be exposed to a flu virus shortly before getting vaccinated or during the two-week period that it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated. This exposure may result in a person becoming ill with the flu before the vaccine begins to protect them.
- People may become ill from other (non-flu) viruses, which can also cause flu-like symptoms.
- A person may be exposed to a flu virus that is not included in the seasonal flu vaccine. There are many different flu viruses that circulate every year. The flu shot protects against the 3 or 4 viruses that research suggests will be most common.



## More Information

For more information or if you have questions, contact:

**Diabetes Educator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Diabetes Program

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**[www.anthc.org/diabetes](http://www.anthc.org/diabetes)**  
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