

TOUCHPOINT

PEDIATRICS, P.A.

2019-2020 Flu Vaccine Available:

We now have in stock a good supply of injectable flu vaccines for the 2019-20 season. For this season, we are happy to announce once again that we are able to provide the preservative-free, expanded-protection **quadrivalent** flu vaccine (see details below). For this year, we will not be able to offer the FluMist nasal spray, due to significant delays in production and shipment from the manufacturer.

In addition to vaccinating children, as always, our office will be able to offer the flu vaccine to adult household members of the family as well, including pregnant women, grandparents, babysitters, and anyone else who wants to protect themselves and the children they contact from the flu. The best way to keep the flu from spreading around a family or a community is to vaccinate as many people as possible each season.

Please contact the office at 973-665-0900 if you are interested in scheduling your children (or yourselves) to receive the flu vaccine. We have both weekday and weekend times available.

Flu Vaccine Q&A:

Q: Should my child receive a flu vaccine this year?

A: The Center for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and our pediatricians do recommend that all people 6 months of age and older should be vaccinated against the flu every fall. This advice is especially important for children at high risk for influenza complications, such as children below age 5, and any child with a chronic medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes. It is also especially important for household contacts of newborn babies to be vaccinated, since these babies are too young to be vaccinated themselves.

Q: What if my child is allergic to eggs?

A: In the past, since the influenza vaccine is grown in eggs, it was believed that people with egg allergies had to be cautious when receiving the vaccine. However, extensive recent studies have shown that the flu vaccine is extremely safe to receive, even for people with severe egg allergies. Their risk of a significant reaction from the flu vaccine is no greater than that from any other vaccine. Therefore, it is recommended that even people with severe egg allergies may receive the flu vaccine just like anyone else, without any special concerns or precautions.

Q: What's the difference between the new "*quadrivalent*" flu vaccine and the old "*trivalent*" flu vaccine?

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A: Each year, the vaccine manufacturers, in conjunction with the Center for Disease Control, try to predict which strains of the flu virus will be circulating in the community that year. Up until recently, flu vaccines have been *trivalent*, meaning they protect against *three* strains of flu virus (typically two “A” strains and one “B” strain). In 2013, the FDA authorized the production of *quadrivalent* flu vaccines which protect against *four* strains of flu virus: the same three strains as are covered by the trivalent vaccine, plus an additional, fourth, “B” strain. This quadrivalent vaccine should be able to provide even better protection than the trivalent vaccine, and is ultimately expected to replace the trivalent vaccine as the flu vaccine of choice. Our office was able to obtain all quadrivalent flu vaccines for our shipments this fall.

Q: What's the difference between the FluMist and the Flu Shot, and which one should my child get?

A: The FluMist is a nasal spray version of the flu vaccine that is an alternative to the flu shot. It should not be given to children who have asthma or who have wheezed from a viral infection within the past year, but it is a good alternative to the flu shot for healthy children ages 2 years or older. Also, many children with a fear of needles greatly prefer the nasal spray to an injection. Since it is a live, weakened version of the flu virus and is sprayed into the nose, some children do have minor side effects such as runny nose or mild fever for a day or two after the FluMist, but these side effects are nowhere near as significant as actual influenza. However, as noted above, our office will not be able to offer FluMist this year, due to supply and distribution issues from the manufacturer.

Q: Is it possible to get the flu from the flu vaccine?

A: No. The side effects from the flu shot, if any, are generally mild soreness at the site of injection, and occasionally mild fever for a day or two.

Q: Does the flu vaccine contain the preservative thimerosal?

A: No, all the formulations of flu vaccines that we have in our office are thimerosal-free.

Q: Does my child need one dose or two doses of the flu vaccine this year?

A: Most children will only need one dose of flu vaccine this season, but some children will need two doses to be fully protected. Children 9 years of age or older will only need one dose. Children under age 9 who have *not* already received at least two doses of flu vaccine in previous years will need two doses this year, at least four weeks apart. If you have questions about your child's specific needs, please contact our office.



Q: What about Tamiflu?

A: It is better to get the flu vaccine than to get the flu. If you do get the flu, and the flu test done in our office is positive, the doctor may discuss Tamiflu with you. Tamiflu is an antiviral medicine, not an antibiotic. It does not cure the flu, but if started within the first 48 hours of the flu, it may decrease the severity and duration of illness, as well as decrease contagiousness. It can also be given to close exposures of people with flu (other household members) to reduce the chance of illness. It is strongly recommended for those with very severe flu symptoms (such as patients sick enough to be hospitalized), as well as those with significant underlying medical conditions. However, there are possible adverse effects from Tamiflu such as GI distress, headaches, abdominal discomfort, and even hallucinations/delirium. If you are considering asking for Tamiflu, please discuss with one of our physicians. We will not prescribe Tamiflu without seeing a patient or having documentation of flu in a close family member.