

**Influenza Vaccine and Recommendations**  
**October 2008**  
**Oregon Public Health Immunization Program**

**Influenza Vaccine**

Annual influenza vaccination combined with good hygiene can be very effective at preventing influenza disease. Each year, a new influenza vaccine is released in the fall. The vaccine provides protection against 3 strains of influenza. The new strains were selected by a consortium of worldwide researchers, virologists, and epidemiologists who determine which strains of influenza are most likely to circulate each flu season based on genetic drift, strains seen in the southern hemisphere, and estimations of which strains will be the most dangerous. In some cases, the flu vaccine strains do not all change. This year, all three strains are being changed.

There is always the possibility of the flu vaccine strains being ‘mismatched’. This means that a strain of influenza is circulating that was not included in the vaccine components for that season. Having an influenza vaccination will still help protect you from the more serious complications of the flu, sometimes preventing many of the more serious side effects, even if the strains are not perfectly matched.

Over 1.4 million doses are shipping out across Oregon currently, and no shortages are expected. Clinics should can held as early as September and will continue into March. The Oregon influenza season tends to peak towards the end of February.

Due to the complexity of production and distribution of the vaccine, the actual shipment dates may vary by location and can be unpredictable. This year, over 140 million doses of influenza are being distributed in the United States. Many agencies have already begun receiving vaccine and clinics are being scheduled. There is no indication of a production or distribution delay for influenza vaccine.

Influenza vaccine can be given as an injection in the arm (adults and children) or the thigh (babies). Persons 6 months and up can be given the injected influenza vaccine. There is also a type of influenza vaccine that can be sprayed into the nose. Only people that are 2 years through 49 years, and don’t have any chronic health conditions, should get the nasal spray vaccine. Pregnant women should not get the spray vaccine, but can get the injected influenza vaccine.

## **Persons recommended for influenza vaccine include:**

- Persons of all ages that wish to reduce the spread of influenza
- Children 6 months through 19 years old (the highest risk for flu complications are newborns through 5 years old)
- All adults over the age of 50 years
- Women who are pregnant during flu season
- Persons with chronic diseases or in contact with persons with chronic diseases:
  - Heart and lung diseases, including persons with asthma
  - Persons receiving long-term aspirin therapy
  - Diabetes
  - Kidney and Liver diseases
  - Persons with cancer or undergoing treatments
  - Persons who've had or will have an organ transplant
  - Any disease or condition that reduces immune system
- Persons living in a chronic care or other long-term care facility
- All persons working in a health care facility
- Contacts of infants or the elderly
- New parents (babies under 6 months are at an especially high risk because they are too young for influenza vaccine... getting adults around the newborn vaccinated is the best way to prevent influenza from spreading in your household)
- Children under 9 who are getting the influenza vaccine for the 1<sup>st</sup> time should get a second dose 4 weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> dose is given.