

## YOU AND THE FLU

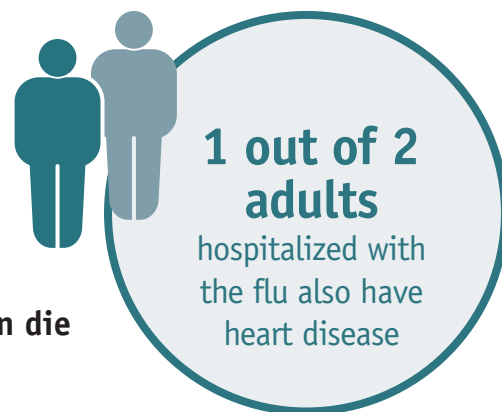
If you have heart disease, you are more likely to get very sick from the flu. **Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones.**

### ▶ What You Need to Know

If you have heart disease and get the flu, you are more likely to get very sick. **COVID-19 and the flu season are a double threat** to everyone, but especially if you have a heart condition. Your health could get worse.

You could:

- Have breathing problems
- Have a heart attack
- Have a stroke
- Get pneumonia
- Need to go to the hospital or even die

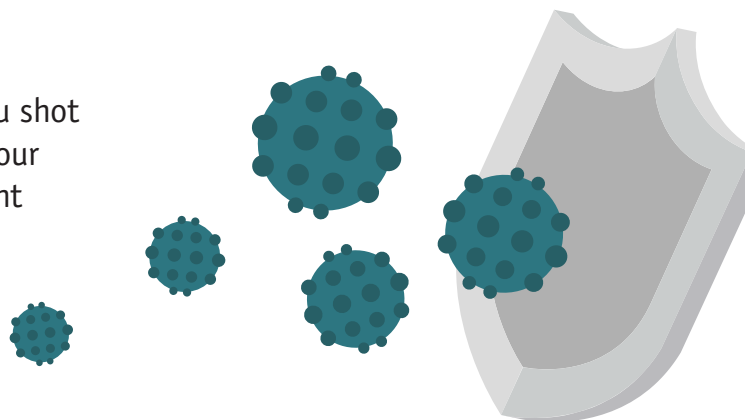


### ▶ Get a Flu Shot Every Year

The flu is caused by a virus. Flu viruses change from year to year. Researchers match the flu shot with the flu viruses they expect to be most common for that season. The flu shot you get each year is made to protect you for one flu season. Even if this year's virus is like the one from last year, your protection against that virus weakens over time. That's why you need a flu shot every year.

### ▶ How Does the Flu Shot Work?

A health care professional uses a needle to give you the flu shot in the muscle in your upper arm. After you get the shot, your body will make antibodies to help you fight off the different kinds of flu virus expected for the year. Antibodies fight things that don't belong in your body, such as viruses or bacteria. It takes about two weeks for your body to make the antibodies that will fight off the flu.



## ▶ How Flu Shots Help

You can't get the flu from the flu shot. You should know that the flu shot lowers your chance of getting the flu, but it doesn't provide complete protection. Sometimes you can get the flu even if you get the shot. If that happens, your illness may be milder. Experts say some protection from the flu is better than none.

Also, the flu shot can help your health in other ways:

- Flu shots have been shown to lower your odds of having a **heart attack or stroke and other heart problems**, especially if you have had a heart attack recently.
- If you are living with heart failure, getting a flu shot lowers the chance you will go to the **hospital for a heart problem**.
- People getting flu shots **prevent thousands of deaths each year** compared with not getting a flu shot.

## ▶ Where to Get a Flu Shot

Start by calling your doctor's office. You may also be able to get a flu shot at your pharmacy and community health clinic. Visit [VaccineFinder.org](https://www.vaccinefinder.org) to find a place near you to get a flu shot.

Everyone  
6 months of age  
and older **should  
get a flu shot**  
every year.

## ▶ When to Get It

Get the flu shot early. The flu season usually begins in October and can last into May. Many people get sick in December and February. But people can come down with the flu in April and even May. It's never too late to get a flu shot during the flu season.

## ▶ Make It a Habit

You already know that eating more fruits and vegetables, staying active, and keeping up with health visits can help protect your heart. Healthy habits also include getting your flu shot every year.

*Flu shots  
save lives!*



For more information, visit  
[CardioSmart.org/Flu](https://www.heart.org/flu)