



Asthma, Flu and You

Infectious respiratory diseases like influenza, commonly called the flu, put individuals with asthma at increased risk for serious flu illness and complications.

Why are individuals with asthma at increased risk for flu complications?

- Flu can cause additional swelling of the airways in individuals with asthma.
- Flu infections can trigger asthma attacks and worsen asthma symptoms.
- Getting the flu can also lead to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases. Individuals with asthma are more likely to get pneumonia after getting the flu than individuals who do not have asthma.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease. When you have asthma there is always some swelling in the airways. Learn more at [Lung.org/asthma](https://www.lung.org/asthma)

About flu

Flu causes millions of people to get sick and is responsible for up to 51,000 deaths each year in the United States. It can cause mild to severe illness by infecting the nose, throat, and lungs. Common symptoms of the flu include:



Fever



Headache, muscle aches and joint pain



Cough



Sore throat



Nasal congestion and runny nose

Flu symptoms often appear suddenly and can keep you home for a week and sometimes longer depending on the severity.



How do I help protect myself and my child from the flu?



Get a flu shot every year. Everyone 6 months and older should get an annual flu shot, ideally by the end of October. Later vaccination is still beneficial if flu viruses are still circulating.



Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.



Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Clean frequently touched surfaces including countertops, doorknobs, and handrails regularly.



Stay home and away from others when you are sick. Consider wearing a high-quality mask in your home to help lower the risk of spreading the flu.



Take steps to clean the air. This can include bringing in fresh outside air or purifying indoor air.

Flu shot facts

- Flu shots do not prevent every flu illness, they have been shown to reduce severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick.
- Flu shots have a long-established safety record in people with asthma. In 2001, research funded by the American Lung Association determined the flu vaccine is safe for people with asthma.
- Hundreds of millions of people in the United States have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50+ years.
- People with egg allergy can get a flu vaccine.
- Flu shots are widely available beginning in September. Some common locations to receive a flu shot include: your healthcare provider's office, a pharmacy, community health center, or health department clinic. You can visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find a location near you.

Individuals with asthma are at increased risk for other infectious respiratory diseases like pneumococcal pneumonia, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19. You can get a flu shot at the same visit as many other routinely recommended vaccinations. Talk to a healthcare provider about whether you are up to date with your recommended vaccinations.

Visit [Lung.org/prevent-flu](https://www.lung.org/prevent-flu) for more information.