

Vaccination FAQ: Influenza (flu)

For People with Kidney Diseases



What is influenza?

Seasonal influenza (the flu) is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. It is common in all parts of the world. Influenza spreads easily between people when they cough or sneeze. Vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease.¹

What are signs and symptoms of influenza?

Symptoms of influenza usually begin around 2 days after being exposed to someone who has the virus. Symptoms may include¹:

- sudden onset of fever
- cough (usually dry, can be severe, and can last two weeks or more)
- headache
- muscle and joint pain
- severe malaise
- sore throat
- runny nose

Can there be complications from the influenza virus?

Most people recover from fever and other symptoms within a week without requiring medical attention. However, influenza can also cause severe complications, including pneumonia, sepsis, hospitalization, or death. People with kidney diseases should seek medical care when they have symptoms of flu, especially if symptoms are severe.

Are there certain people more at risk for severe complications?

Most deaths associated with influenza occur among people aged 65 years or older.

People at greater risk for severe disease or complications are pregnant women, children under 5 years of age, older people, individuals with chronic medical conditions (such as **chronic kidney disease**, cardiac, pulmonary, metabolic, neurodevelopmental, liver, or hematologic diseases).

Health care professionals and caregivers are at high risk for spreading influenza, particularly to vulnerable individuals or patients. Vaccination protects health care workers and those around them.¹

What is the best protection against influenza?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza, and is especially important for people at high risk for influenza complications and their caregivers.¹

Safe and effective vaccines have been used for more than 60 years. Immunity from vaccination goes away over time so annual vaccination is recommended for everyone to protect against influenza. Because the influenza virus can change from year to year, the vaccines are updated annually to provide the best protection.

The vaccine may be less effective in older people, but it will make the illness less severe and reduces the chance of complications and death.

¹ *World Health Organization - Influenza (seasonal)*



Vaccination FAQ: Influenza (flu)

For People with Kidney Diseases

What are the recommendations for people being considered for a kidney transplant?

Annual flu vaccination is recommended for patients being considered for a kidney transplant.²

Can post-transplant patients receive an influenza vaccination?

Yes, it is recommended that solid organ transplant recipients receive an annual flu vaccination.

What if a patient is noted to have signs/symptoms of influenza while receiving dialysis in the outpatient facility?

If a patient has signs and symptoms of influenza in a dialysis facility, place a mask on the patient and ensure the health care staff institute contact precautions. Advise the patient to seek medical care and consider testing.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/evidence-to-recommendations/influenza-solid-organ-transplant-etr.html>

