

Flu vaccines for people age 50 and older

You could be exposed to two kinds of flu this flu season. There is a vaccine for each type, one for seasonal flu and one for H1N1 (swine flu). The Kentucky Department for Public Health wants you to know how to reduce your risk of getting the flu. Follow these steps to make sure you are protected:

Should people 50 and older get the seasonal flu vaccine?

If you are 50 or older, you fall into the group of people who should receive the **seasonal flu vaccine**, which is available now. Seasonal flu is the term used for yearly flu viruses that occur usually during late fall and winter.

What groups of people age 50 to 64 should get the swine flu vaccine first?

People who are age 50 to 64 in these target groups should get the vaccine when it is first made available:

- People with chronic health conditions.
- Household contacts or caregivers of children younger than 6 months old.
- Health care and emergency medical services workers.

All other people age 50 to 64 should get the swine flu vaccine after the target groups have received it.

People age 65 or older are not in a target group for receiving swine flu vaccine first because they appear to be less at risk for swine flu than younger people. Health experts say people in this age group may have some immunity to the swine flu. However, some people 65 and older will become sick with swine flu and could have complications. Any person in this age group who has flu-like symptoms should contact a health care provider immediately. People in this age group should get the swine flu vaccine after target groups have received it.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **does not expect** there will be a shortage of swine flu vaccine, but vaccine availability and demand can be unpredictable. The vaccine will be ready in mid- to late-October. It is likely that the vaccine will be available in limited quantities in the beginning.

Should I get the vaccine as a flu shot or as the nasal mist?

People age 50 and older should only receive shots. They should not receive nasal mist vaccine for seasonal flu or swine flu. The nasal mist is not recommended for anyone older than 49.

Prevent the spread of flu:

- Wash your hands often in warm, soapy water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- If you have a fever, stay home. Do not return to work until your fever has been gone 24 hours.

For more information:

- Flu information — flu.gov
- Kentucky flu information — healthalerts.ky.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information hot line — 1-800-CDC-INFO
- Kentucky Department for Public Health — 9/09