

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

for Patients with Asthma What to do during Flu Season?

Why is getting a cold or the flu serious when you have asthma?

When you have asthma, the airways that carry air into your lungs tend to be swollen and irritated. If you get sick with a cold or the flu, the coughing, sneezing, and other symptoms of your illness put extra stress on your airways. Since your airways are already irritated and swollen from having asthma, this extra stress from having a cold or the flu can lead to serious breathing problems or to a serious infection such as pneumonia or bronchitis.

What do I do if I feel sick?

Watch for complications with your asthma and tell your doctor because your doctor can provide suggestions on how to monitor and manage your illness. Your doctor may also help keep your asthma under control by changing your asthma medicine while you are sick.

How do I avoid a cold or the flu?

A cold and the flu are spread from person to person by close contact with someone who is infected. These viruses can also be spread through contact with items that a sick person has touched. To avoid the flu, get the flu shot every year. This is the best way to avoid being infected. Washing your hands and keeping your fingers away from your nose, mouth and eyes are good ways to avoid getting sick. Also, always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your arm when you cough or sneeze.

Who should get a flu shot?

People with chronic diseases, such as asthma, should get the flu shot every year. Anyone in close contact or who lives with a person with asthma should also get the flu vaccine. This decreases the risk of getting the flu and spreading it within your house.

People with asthma should **not** get the nasal spray flu vaccine because of the increased risk of wheezing after the vaccination is administered. Instead, they should get the injectable flu vaccine (flu shot). The flu shot cannot give you the flu.

When and where is the flu vaccine available?

The ideal time to get your flu shot is in the fall, but you can receive the vaccine anytime between October and March. It is best to get vaccinated as soon as the flu shot is available; however, it will still help if you get it later in the season. Contact your primary health care provider to schedule an appointment to get the flu vaccine. In North Carolina, you can find a flu clinic near you through the **Flu Clinic Finder's website at <http://www.thecarolinascenter.org/fcf/>**.

