



October 8, 2009

Nasal Spray Influenza Vaccine (FluMist®)

What is FluMist®?

FluMist® is a nasal mist in which a spray is given in each nostril. It helps the body develop antibodies, which help protect a person from the flu.

Who can be given FluMist®?

FluMist® has been approved for some children, adolescents, and healthy adults 2-49 years of age.

Who should not get FluMist®?

There are certain people who should not be given FluMist®:

- People less than 2 years of age
- People 50 years of age and over
- People with chronic diseases or conditions that weaken their immune system or place them at high risk for complications from influenza (i.e. heart disease; asthma; diabetes or kidney failure)
- People who take medications that can weaken the immune system
- Children less than 5 years old with a history of recurrent wheezing
- Children or adolescents receiving aspirin therapy
- People with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome
- Pregnant women
- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs or who are allergic to any of the nasal spray vaccine components

What are the most common side effects?

In children, side effects can include runny nose, headache, wheezing, vomiting, muscle aches, and fever. In adults, side effects can include runny nose, headache, sore throat, and cough.

Can I get the flu from the FluMist® vaccine?

FluMist® has been developed in a way that will not cause the flu. Unlike the flu shot, the nasal spray flu vaccine does contain live viruses; however, the viruses are weakened and cannot cause flu illness. The weakened viruses are cold-adapted, which means they cannot infect the lungs or other areas where warmer temperatures exist.

Can contacts of people with weakened immune systems get FluMist®?

People who are in contact with others with severely weakened immune systems when they are being cared for in a protective environment (e.g., people with hematopoietic stem cell transplants), should not get FluMist®. People who have contact with others with lesser degrees of immunosuppression (e.g., people with diabetes, asthma taking corticosteroids, or HIV) can get FluMist®. In addition, household members and other close contacts of pregnant women can get the nasal spray vaccine.

Can people getting FluMist® give the vaccine viruses to others?

In clinical studies, transmission of vaccine viruses to close contacts has only occurred rarely. The estimated risk of getting infected after close contact with a person vaccinated with the nasal-spray flu vaccine is very low (0.6%-2.4%). Because the viruses are weakened, infection is unlikely to result in influenza illness symptoms since the vaccine viruses have not been shown to mutate (change) into typical influenza viruses.



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Can FluMist® be given to patients when they are ill?

FluMist® can be given to people with minor illnesses (i.e. diarrhea or mild upper respiratory tract infection with or without fever). However, if a person has nasal congestion that might limit the vaccine's ability to get to the nasal lining, then one should wait to get the vaccine until the nasal congestion is reduced.

Can FluMist® be given at the same time as other vaccines?

An injectible (inactivated) vaccine may be given at the same time or at any time before or after the nasal-spray flu vaccine. The H1N1 nasal spray cannot be given at the same time as the seasonal flu nasal spray.

Can FluMist® be used together with influenza antiviral medications?

If a person is taking an influenza antiviral drug (including Symmetrel [amantadine] for Parkinson's disease), then the nasal-spray flu vaccine should not be given until 48 hours after the last dose of the antiviral medication. If a person has received the nasal-spray flu vaccine, an influenza antiviral medication should not be given until 2 weeks after the nasal-spray flu vaccine was given.

Is it safe to breastfeed after receiving FluMist®?

Yes. FluMist® vaccine does not affect the safety of mothers who are breastfeeding or their infants.

Is it safe for pregnant healthcare workers to administer FluMist®?

Yes. Special precautions (such as gloves) are not necessary. Hands should be washed or cleaned with waterless hand sanitizer before and after administering the vaccine or having any direct contact with patients in a healthcare setting.

How can I get more information?

For more information on H1N1, call the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-5558 or email flu@sedgwick.gov.