



Vaccination information
for Natives by Natives

Flu Vaccine



Our ancestors faced many serious illnesses including the flu. Several generations ago, many died from the flu. Today the flu is still deadly. However, we have vaccines that can help protect ourselves and our communities.



“ My great grandmother lost multiple children to the flu. Before we had the flu shot, it was common for people to get very sick or die from the flu. The vaccine helps stop history from repeating itself. ”

– Tam Lutz, MPH, MHA, Lummi Nation Tribal Elder

Common Flu Symptoms

The flu is an illness that attacks your whole body and causes some or all of these:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness

The flu can also result in hospitalization and death, especially for those most vulnerable, like people with certain medical conditions and Elders.

How Flu Spreads

The flu is spread through tiny droplets in the air. When you breathe in these droplets, you may get sick. The flu also spreads when you touch a surface with droplets on it, then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

How to Protect Yourself

To protect yourself, you should wash your hands regularly, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and get vaccinated. Wearing a mask in public spaces protects you and others from getting sick.

How the Shot Works

Within our bodies, each of us has warrior cells that stand guard and attack diseases. When we get the flu shot, the ingredients in the shot tell our warrior cells how to recognize and fight the flu. That is why if you get a flu shot, you are less likely to get sick with the flu. It can also reduce the seriousness of illness if you happen to get sick.

Shot Side Effects

You may experience side effects from the flu shot. Most side effects are mild and go away within a few days. Mild side effects are a good sign that your warrior cells are preparing to recognize and fight the disease. Side effects are not a sign of illness.



“ Sometimes people think the flu shot makes you sick with the flu, which is not true. When you feel side effects like a fever after you get a shot, what you are feeling is your body gearing up to fight the flu. Getting the flu can be 100 times worse than the vaccine’s side effects. That’s why I always get the flu shot.”

- Mary Scott, RN, Navajo Nation Elder

Common side effects from the flu shot include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where you got the shot
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches

Flu is a Trickster

The flu is sneaky. About once a year, the flu changes how it looks to try to fool your body. That’s why we need flu shots each year – so our bodies can stay up to date on how to recognize and fight the flu.

It’s also important to get a flu shot every year, because our warrior cells’ ability to fight flu decreases over time.

Everyone 6 months and older needs to get vaccinated against the flu – including young, healthy people. When everyone who is able gets vaccinated, it makes it less likely that healthy people spread the flu to those that are more vulnerable.

Shot Safety

The flu shot has been around for over 50 years. Millions of Americans have safely received the flu shot. This includes American Indians and Alaska Natives. It is also monitored for safety by allowing people to report their side effects.

“ When I get my flu shot, I’m doing it for my family, my friends, and my community. I want everyone to realize how important modern medicine is for their overall health, as well as holistic, traditional approaches... they all work together.”

-Gretchen LaDue, Elder and Cowlitz Tribal Member



Shot Effectiveness

If you get the flu shot, you are about 50% less likely to get sick with the flu. Getting the vaccine can also reduce the seriousness of illness if you happen to get the flu.

Where to Get Vaccinated

To get vaccinated contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local pharmacy or clinic.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

Additional Information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative. For questions, contact us at VacciNative@npaihb.org.

