



FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

Flu shot or FluMist?

Influenza (flu) can be serious. Although most people who get the flu feel sick for a week or two, about 20,000 people die from it in the United States each year. That is why physicians urge their patients to be vaccinated against the flu every fall. In the past, the flu shot was the only option. Now, there is a second option called FluMist, which is a nasal spray.



Flu shot

- Doctor or nurse must give the flu shot
- Costs about \$6.25 per shot. Most health insurance companies pay for the flu shot
- Protects against the same strains of flu
- Must be given every year
- Highly effective in children and adults
- Can be given to anyone who is at least 6 months old
- The flu shot can be safely given to pregnant women who are past their first trimester
- Temporary side effects that mimic the flu are fever and malaise

FluMist

- Patients can use FluMist themselves or give it to their children
- Costs about \$46 per dose. Not currently known if health insurance companies will pay for FluMist
- Protects against the same strains of flu
- Must be given every year
- Highly effective in children and adults
- FluMist is approved for use in children ages 5 to 17 years and for adults ages 18 to 49
- FluMist is not recommended during pregnancy (due to a lack of research to show that it's safe)
- Temporary side effects that mimic the flu are nasal congestion, headache, and muscle aches

Bottom line

The main advantage of FluMist is that it is given in the form of a nasal spray, making it attractive for those who don't like getting a shot. You cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Although healthy people will not get the flu from FluMist, there is a very small risk they could pass it on to those with weakened immune systems (eg, those who have received organ transplants and those with HIV or AIDS). That is because after you receive FluMist, your nasal secretions might contain weakened flu virus for up to 3 weeks. Therefore, FluMist is probably not the best option if you live with such people.



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