

# Infectious diseases A-Z: Roll up your sleeve, it's time for your flu shot

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When is the best time to get your flu shot? Ideally, it's before flu season becomes active in your community.

Flu activity across the U.S. is low, making it the perfect time to roll up your sleeve for your annual [flu shot](#). "The general advice is get the vaccine as soon as you can," says Dr. Gregory Poland, director of Mayo Clinic's Vaccine Research Group. "People often wait to see if it's a bad flu year. The problem is you don't get to predict when you're going to be exposed. And in today's world, you're around hundreds to thousands of people every day.

Our recommendation is as soon as the vaccine is available, get immunized."

It takes about two weeks for your body to build immunity after receiving the vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone be immunized against flu by the end of October.

"The recommendation in the U.S. is that everybody age 6 months and older every year get a flu vaccine," says Dr. Poland.

While the [flu vaccine](#) is not 100% effective, it saves thousands of lives and prevents illness and hospitalizations each year. The CDC estimates that from Oct. 1, 2018, through May 4, there were 37.4 million to 42.9 million reported cases of flu-related illnesses and 36,400 to 61,200 deaths attributed to the flu.

"Would you get in your car without putting a seat belt on or having air bags, even though those (safety devices) aren't 100%? They are the best we have," says Dr. Poland. "It's the best way we know to protect ourselves."

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