

**Influenza Vaccination Training and Procedures  
North Dakota Department of Health  
Division of Emergency Medical Services & Trauma**

**Which EMS Providers may administer the Influenza Vaccination?**

A North Dakota licensed Paramedic that has received initial and continued education in the administration of influenza vaccine. The Paramedic must be under the direction of a licensed North Dakota Physician and have current protocols in place. An EMT, EMT-Intermediate is not allowed to administer the vaccines.

**Influenza vaccination procedures**

1. Two type of vaccines:
  - a. The “flu shot” – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. However Paramedics may not administer to anyone younger than 18 years of age.
  - b. The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu virus that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for “live attenuated influenza vaccine” or FluMist®). Is approved for use in people who are 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant or any other underlying medical condition that predisposes them to influenza complications. However Paramedics may not administer to anyone younger than 18 years of age.

Each vaccine contains three influenza viruses-one A (H3N2) virus, one A (H1N1) virus, and one B virus. The viruses in the vaccines change each year based on international surveillance and scientists’ estimations about which types and strains of viruses will circulate in a given year.

About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

**When to get vaccinated**

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September or as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of influenza season vary. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later.

## **Who should get vaccinated?**

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, it is recommended that certain people should get vaccinated each year. They are either people who are at high risk of having serious flu complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications. During flu seasons when vaccine supplies are limited or delayed recommendations are made regarding priority groups for vaccination.

### **People who should get vaccinated each year are:**

1. Pregnant women
2. People 50 years of age or older
3. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
4. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
5. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - a. Health care workers
  - b. Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
  - c. Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (Children less than 6 months of age are too young to be vaccinated). Remember that only individuals 18 years of age and older are qualified to be vaccinated by Paramedics.

## **Who should not be vaccinated?**

There are people who should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. These include but not limited to:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- People who developed Guillian-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine.
- Children less than 6 months of age. The influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group.
- Paramedics may not administer influenza vaccine to person under 18 years of age.
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated).

## **Vaccine Effectiveness**

The ability of Flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and the similarity or “match” between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation. Testing has shown that both the flu shot and the nasal-spray vaccine are effective at preventing the flu.

## **Vaccine Side Effects (What to Expect)**

Different side effects can be associated with the flu shot and LAIV.

The flu shot: The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine will develop no serious problems. However, on rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

LAIV (FluMist®): The viruses in the nasal spray vaccine are weakened and do not cause severe symptoms often associated with influenza illness.

In adults, side effects from LAIV (FluMist®) can include

- Runny nose
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Cough

## **Possible Allergic Reactions**

Even though unlikely there is always a possibility of an allergic reaction. A few of the signs to look for are:

- Unusual behavior
- High Fever
- Difficulty breathing
- Hoarseness
- Wheezing
- Hives
- Any other signs of an allergic reaction

If any of these signs occurs follow your treatment protocol for “allergic reactions” and transport the individual to the hospital immediately. Documentation is critical in this type of situation since you will be required to file a report through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). This report may be accessed through their website, [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov) or by calling 1-800-822-7967. VAERS does not give medical advice so be sure to care for your patient first by following your local protocol.

#### **Documentation required**

1. Initial training will consist of a Licensed Registered Nurse or physician conducting training. Length of training will be dependent on competencies of the individuals administering vaccine. Continuing education must occur once per year prior to the new year’s vaccines release and it may be completed by a licensed Paramedic that has previously received initial vaccination training . Training will consist of new methods and/or vaccines and any other new information distributed. Training must be kept on file with the ambulance service and will be available for inspection by the Department of Health upon request. It is not required to submit training rosters to DEMST unless requested.
2. A record must be completed for every individual receiving the vaccine and kept on file at the EMS Agency office and available for inspection upon request. An example of a vaccination record is available from any public health office or DEMST. A service may develop their own form.
3. Paramedics may not administer vaccines to anyone under the age of 18 years.
4. Any serious adverse reaction must be reported as soon as possible to VAERS.