

# Flu and People with Heart Disease or a History of Stroke

People who have heart disease or a history of stroke are at increased risk of developing serious flu (influenza)-related medical complications. They are one of the high-risk groups that health professionals recommend get the flu vaccine each year. Here are some facts about the flu and heart disease:

- During flu months, there is a **28% increase** in Michigan Medicine hospital admissions for patients with an aortic dissection.
- The risk of hospital admission for a heart attack is **6 times higher** within a week of having the flu.

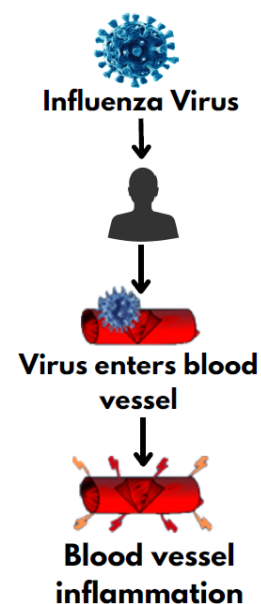
**If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, it is important to get a flu vaccine every year to protect against flu and its possibly serious medical complications.**

## **How does the flu virus affect people with heart disease or a history of stroke?**

When you are infected by the flu virus, the virus can enter your blood vessels and cause **blood vessel inflammation** (swelling, redness, and irritation). Inflammation occurs because your body is sending out cells to trap germs to defend your body from the virus.

Blood vessel inflammation can cause:

- Damage to your heart muscle
- Inflammation of your heart muscle



- Fluid or inflammation in the sac surrounding your heart
- Weakening of the pumping function of your heart

### **Why are flu vaccines important for those with heart disease or a history of stroke?**

Getting a yearly flu vaccine can lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart-related death. Research shows that flu vaccination significantly reduces the risk of serious complications and death from heart disease.

### **Do I need to get the flu vaccine every year?**

**The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine every year.** You need a flu vaccine every year because:

- Your protection (immunity) from vaccination decreases over time.
- Flu vaccines are constantly updated to protect against the most recent strain (type) of flu virus.

### **Is the flu vaccine safe?**

**Yes,** the flu vaccine is completely safe for most people. It has very few, mild side effects that go away on their own. Talk to your healthcare provider before getting a flu shot if:

- You have ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome
- You had a severe allergic reaction before to a dose of any other flu vaccine
- You are feeling sick on the day of your vaccination

### **Can I get the flu from the flu vaccine?**

**No,** the flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness. The flu vaccine is made using inactivated (killed) viruses - meaning the viruses can no longer infect anything - or particles designed to look like a flu virus to your immune system.

## Where can I get a flu vaccine?

Adults can get flu vaccines at doctor's offices, community health clinics, health departments, pharmacies, and even in some workplaces. To find a place near you to get a vaccine, search online at [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

**Get your flu vaccine today!**

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CVC Control #

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