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2025-2026 Medical Exemption – Influenza Vaccine Nursing Home Employees

Arkansas requires all full-time and part-time nursing home employees to receive the influenza vaccine. However, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is allowed to grant medical exemptions. **The ADH is the only entity authorized by state law to do so. A letter issued by the ADH Immunization Medical Director is the only acceptable validation of an exemption. Statements from a physician cannot be accepted by a nursing home without this letter.**

Employees must apply each year for a medical exemption with the ADH. Only a 2025-2026 Medical Exemption Application will be accepted from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The steps to apply for an exemption are:

1. **Fill out an application.** Applicants must include a notarized signature.
2. **Get a letter from the doctor explaining the medical reason for the request.** This letter must be submitted along with the application.
3. **Complete an educational activity.** The law requires applicants to complete an educational activity when requesting an exemption. This can be met by reading the enclosed Influenza Vaccine Information Statement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the risks and benefits of the influenza vaccine.
 - Later in the application, the applicant will be asked to sign that they received and reviewed this statement, that they understand the risks and benefits of the vaccine, and that they still request the exemption.
4. **Submit the completed application.**
 - Each part of the application must be completed, or it will be returned to the applicant. Returned applications will include a checklist showing the reason it could not be processed. Once fixed, the application can be resubmitted.
5. **Wait for approval.** The ADH will send the applicant a letter of approval or denial within 10 working days of receiving a completed application.

Arkansas Department of Health
4815 West Markham St. • Little Rock, AR 72205

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After receiving the approval letter, the employee is responsible for notifying their employer of the approved exemption. The employee should keep the original letter for their files. A copy of the approved letter should also be placed in the employee's personnel file at the nursing home.

If you have questions, please call the Immunization Section toll free at 1-800-574-4040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Labuda', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Labuda, MD, MPH, CTropMed®

Medical Director

Immunizations and Child Health Programs

2025 – 2026 Nursing Home Employees Influenza Vaccine Exemption Application

To avoid processing delays, be sure to complete each part and attach a letter from your physician.

All nursing home facilities require full-time and part-time employees to get the influenza vaccine. However, employees may be exempt if they have a valid medical reason. To request an exemption, employees must submit a letter from their doctor explaining the medical reason, along with this application.

1. Employee's FULL Name and Contact Information:

First _____ Middle _____ Last _____

Street/Mailing Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____

Zip _____

Date of Birth _____ - _____ - _____ Gender _____ Position/Title _____

Race: (Select up to 3) ☐ Alaskan Native or American Indian ☐ Asian ☐ Black or African American ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ☐ White ☐ Other

Ethnicity: (Select 1) ☐ Hispanic or Latino ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino

Daytime Phone (_____) _____ - _____ E-mail _____

2. Nursing Home Facility Information:

Administrator _____

Facility Name _____

Street/Mailing Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (_____) _____ - _____ Fax (_____) _____ - _____

Statement of Refusal to Vaccinate

Influenza or “flu” is a contagious disease typically spread by coughing, sneezing, or nasal secretions. I understand that if I do not receive the influenza vaccine, I am at risk of fever, sore throat, cough, chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, pneumonia, difficulty breathing, hospitalization, and death.

I have decided to decline the required influenza vaccine due to the medical reasons described in the physician’s statement attached to this application.

I affirm that I have received and reviewed the **Influenza Vaccine Information Statement** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I have read and signed the **Statement of Refusal to Vaccinate**, and I still want to apply for a medical exemption to the influenza vaccine requirement.

I understand why the vaccine is required, the benefits and risks of getting the vaccine, and that by not receiving the vaccine, I am at risk of getting influenza, spreading it to others, and not being allowed in the facility during an outbreak. If I show symptoms of influenza, I may also be removed from the facility. I understand that I cannot return until the outbreak is over and the ADH approves my return.

I also understand that I may change my decisions and choose to get vaccinated at any time in the future. Influenza vaccination is strongly recommended by the ADH, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I understand that I may contact my personal physician, a pharmacy, or the ADH toll-free at 1-800-574-4040 if I have questions about influenza vaccination.

Signature _____
Nursing Home Employee

Notary Public

State of _____ County of _____

On this _____ day of _____, 20_____, before me personally
appeared _____ known to me (or satisfactorily proven) to be
the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged that he/she
executed the same for the purposes therein contained.

In witness whereof, I hereunto set my hand and official seal.

OFFICIAL SEAL

Signature _____
Notary Public

My Commission Expires: _____

Please Return Application: CHOOSE ONE METHOD ONLY

MAIL to: Arkansas Department of Health

ATTN: Medical Exemptions

4815 West Markham, Mail Slot #48

Little Rock, AR 72205

EMAIL to: Immunization.Section@arkansas.gov

FAX to: (501)661-2300

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to law as it existed prior to the 82nd General Assembly.

State of Arkansas

As Engrossed: S2/15/99 S3/4/99 H4/2/99

82nd General Assembly

A Bill

Act 1524 of 1999

Regular Session, 1999

SENATE BILL 346

By: Senator Bradford

For An Act To Be Entitled

"THE NURSING HOME RESIDENT AND EMPLOYEE IMMUNIZATION
ACT OF 1999."

Subtitle

"THE NURSING HOME RESIDENT AND EMPLOYEE
IMMUNIZATION ACT OF 1999."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the
"Nursing Home and Employee Immunization Act of 1999".

SECTION 2. Purpose.
In recognition that the sixth leading cause of death in Arkansas is the
combined diagnostic category of 'pneumonia/influenza'; that approximately
ninety percent (90%) of the 'pneumonia/influenza' deaths are in those over
sixty-five (65) years of age; that the Centers for Disease Control ('CDC')
recommends that individuals over the age of sixty-five (65) years have annual
flu shots and a pneumococcal vaccine once; that the CDC further suggests that
consent for immunization be acquired at the time of nursing home admission;
that current utilization of the flu shots by nursing home residents is
approximately fifty percent (50%); that the elderly living in an institutional
setting, where disease may be more readily transmitted, are less protected
than those living in the community; and that the pneumococcal vaccine
utilization by nursing home residents is approximately thirty percent (30%).

SECTION 3. Definitions. As used in this act:

1 (1) "Document" means evidence from a person's physician or healthcare
2 provider in written format indicating the date and place when the individual
3 received the influenza virus vaccine and the pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine;

4 (2) 'Nursing home facilities' means facilities that include any
5 buildings, structure, agency, institution, or place for the reception,
6 accommodation, board, care, or treatment of two (2) or more individuals, who
7 because, of physical or mental infirmity, are unable to sufficiently or
8 properly care for themselves, and for which reception, accommodation, board,
9 care, or treatment, a charge is made, provided the term 'nursing home' shall
10 not include the offices of private physicians and surgeons, residential health
11 care facilities, hospitals, institutions operated by the federal government or
12 any other similar facility where individuals reside or any facility which is
13 conducted by and for those who rely exclusively upon treatment by prayer alone
14 for healing in accordance with the tenets or practices of any recognized
15 religious denomination;

16 (3) "Medically contraindicated" means either that the influenza or
17 pneumococcal vaccines should not be administered to an individual because of a
18 condition that individual has that will be detrimental to the individual's
19 health if the individual receives either of the vaccines;

20 (4) "Report" means to maintain a current list or roster of vaccine
21 status for residents and employees and, by December 1 of each year, to provide
22 that list to the Office of Long-Term Care of the Department of Human Services.

23
24 SECTION 4. Implementation.

25 (a)(1) The Arkansas Board of Health may promulgate rules and regulations
26 to provide for the immunization against influenza virus and pneumococcal
27 disease as provided for in this act. The Office of Long Term Care shall be
28 granted authority to enforce the rules and regulations.

29 (2) The Arkansas Board of Health may also promulgate rules and
30 regulations to provide for the immunization of other individuals and require
31 other institutions and facilities to provide the immunizations provided for in
32 this act.

33 (b) Each nursing home facility in this state shall:

34 (1) Obtain consent from residents or their legal guardians upon
35 admission to participate in all immunization programs that are conducted
36 within the facility while that person is a resident of that facilities, and

1 not in violation of the resident's right to refuse treatment;

2 (2) As a condition of their employment, require all employees to
3 participate in immunization programs conducted while they are employed at the
4 facility, unless meeting the qualifications for exemptions as listed in
5 Section 4 of this act;

6 (3) Document and report, annually, immunizations against
7 influenza virus for both residents and full-time and part-time employees.
8 Document and report, annually, immunizations against pneumococcal disease for
9 residents.

10 (c) Any nursing home facility which violates this act shall be subject
11 to suspension and revocation of its license.

12 (d) The Arkansas Department of Health shall provide vaccines, supplies, and
13 staff necessary for the immunizations of nursing home residents and employees
14 as provided for in this act.

15
16 SECTION 5. Exemptions. All residents or full-time or part-time
17 employees of nursing home facilities shall be immunized according to this act
18 with the following exemptions:

19 (1) No individual shall be required to receive either an influenza
20 virus vaccine or a pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine if the vaccine is medically
21 contraindicated as described in the product labeling approved by the Food and
22 Drug Administration; and

23 (2) The provisions of this section shall not apply if the resident or
24 legal guardian object on the grounds that the immunization conflicts with the
25 religious tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious
26 denomination of which the resident or guardian is an adherent or member.

27
28 SECTION 6. All provisions of this act of a general and permanent nature
29 are amendatory to the Arkansas Code of 1987 Annotated and the Arkansas Code
30 Revision Commission shall incorporate the same in the Code.

31
32 SECTION 7. If any provision of this act or the application thereof to
33 any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect
34 other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without
35 the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this
36 act are declared to be severable.

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SECTION 8. All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this act are
hereby repealed.

/s/ Bradford

APPROVED: 4/15/1999

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine (Live, Intranasal): What You Need to Know

Many vaccine information statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite www.immunize.org/vis

1. Why get vaccinated?

Influenza vaccine can prevent **influenza (flu)**.

Flu is a contagious disease that spreads around the United States every year, usually between October and May. Anyone can get the flu, but it is more dangerous for some people. Infants and young children, people 65 years of age and older, pregnant people, and people with certain health conditions or a weakened immune system are at greatest risk of flu complications.

Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections, and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. If you have a medical condition, such as heart disease, cancer, or diabetes, flu can make it worse.

Flu can cause fever and chills, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, and runny or stuffy nose. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

In an average year, **thousands of people in the United States die from flu**, and many more are hospitalized. Flu vaccine prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related visits to the doctor each year.

2. Live, attenuated influenza vaccine

CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated every flu season. **Children 6 months through 8 years of age** may need 2 doses during a single flu season. **Everyone else** needs only 1 dose each flu season.

Live, attenuated influenza vaccine (called “LAIV”) is a nasal spray vaccine that may be given to non-pregnant people **2 through 49 years of age**.

It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after vaccination.

There are many flu viruses, and they are always changing. Each year a new flu vaccine is made to protect against the influenza viruses believed to be likely to cause disease in the upcoming flu season. Even when the vaccine doesn’t exactly match these viruses, it may still provide some protection.

Influenza vaccine **does not cause flu**.

Influenza vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

3. Talk with your health care provider

Tell your vaccination provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Is **younger than 2 years or older than 49 years** of age
- Is **pregnant**. Live, attenuated influenza vaccine is not recommended for pregnant people
- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of influenza vaccine**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**
- Is a **child or adolescent 2 through 17 years of age who is receiving aspirin or aspirin- or salicylate-containing products**
- Has a **weakened immune system**
- Is a **child 2 through 4 years old who has asthma or a history of wheezing** in the past 12 months
- Is **5 years or older and has asthma**
- Has **taken influenza antiviral medication** in the last 3 weeks
- **Cares for severely immunocompromised people** who require a protected environment
- Has other **underlying medical conditions** that can put people at higher risk of serious flu complications (such as **lung disease, heart disease, kidney disease**)



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like diabetes, kidney or liver disorders, neurologic or neuromuscular or metabolic disorders)

- Does **not** have a spleen, or has a **non-functioning spleen**
- Has a **cochlear implant**
- Has a **cerebrospinal fluid leak** (a leak of the fluid that surrounds the brain to the nose, throat, ear, or some other location in the head)
- Has had **Guillain-Barré Syndrome** within 6 weeks after a previous dose of influenza vaccine

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone influenza vaccination until a future visit.

For some patients, a different type of influenza vaccine (inactivated or recombinant influenza vaccine) might be more appropriate than live, attenuated influenza vaccine.

People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting influenza vaccine.

Your health care provider can give you more information.

4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

- Runny nose or nasal congestion, wheezing, and headache can happen after LAIV vaccination.
- Vomiting, muscle aches, fever, sore throat, and cough are other possible side effects.

If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after vaccination and are mild and short-lived.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

5. What if there is a serious problem?

An allergic reaction could occur after the vaccinated person leaves the clinic. If you see signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness), call **9-1-1** and get the person to the nearest hospital.

For other signs that concern you, call your health care provider.

Adverse reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your health care provider will usually file this report, or you can do it yourself. Visit the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov or call **1-800-822-7967**. *VAERS is only for reporting reactions, and VAERS staff members do not give medical advice.*

6. The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) is a federal program that was created to compensate people who may have been injured by certain vaccines. Claims regarding alleged injury or death due to vaccination have a time limit for filing, which may be as short as two years. Visit the VICP website at www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation or call **1-800-338-2382** to learn about the program and about filing a claim.

7. How can I learn more?

- Ask your health care provider.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Visit the website of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for vaccine package inserts and additional information at www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-4636** (1-800-CDC-INFO) or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/flu.



Influenza (Flu) Vaccine (Inactivated or Recombinant): *What you need to know*

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Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections, and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. If you have a medical condition, such as heart disease, cancer, or diabetes, flu can make it worse.

Flu can cause fever and chills, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, and runny or stuffy nose. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

In an average year, **thousands of people in the United States die from flu**, and many more are hospitalized. Flu vaccine prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related visits to the doctor each year.

2. Influenza vaccines

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It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after vaccination.

There are many flu viruses, and they are always changing. Each year a new flu vaccine is made to protect against the influenza viruses believed to be likely to cause disease in the upcoming flu season.

Even when the vaccine doesn't exactly match these viruses, it may still provide some protection.

Influenza vaccine **does not cause flu**.

Influenza vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

3. Talk with your health care provider

Tell your vaccination provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of influenza vaccine**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**
- Has ever had **Guillain-Barré Syndrome** (also called "GBS")

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone influenza vaccination until a future visit.

Influenza vaccine can be administered at any time during pregnancy. People who are or will be pregnant during influenza season should receive inactivated influenza vaccine.

People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting influenza vaccine.

Your health care provider can give you more information.



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4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

- Soreness, redness, and swelling where the shot is given, fever, muscle aches, and headache can happen after influenza vaccination.
- There may be a very small increased risk of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) after inactivated influenza vaccine (the flu shot).

Young children who get the flu shot along with pneumococcal vaccine (PCV13) and/or DTaP vaccine at the same time might be slightly more likely to have a seizure caused by fever. Tell your health care provider if a child who is getting flu vaccine has ever had a seizure.

People sometimes faint after medical procedures, including vaccination. Tell your provider if you feel dizzy or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

5. What if there is a serious problem?

An allergic reaction could occur after the vaccinated person leaves the clinic. If you see signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness), call **9-1-1** and get the person to the nearest hospital.

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