

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

NOW, MORE THAN EVER: THE 2020-2021 FLU VACCINE

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What's Different This Year?

Protecting yourself and your family from unnecessary and potentially serious illness is always in the best interests of good health. For this reason, seasonal flu shots are recommended every fall. This year the seasonal flu is not the only viral threat, as COVID-19 continues to infect thousands of people. **Getting a flu shot has never been more important.**

Did you know that it is possible to have the flu and COVID-19 at the same time? Medical evidence suggests that those suffering from both viruses are twice as likely to die as people who have only COVID-19. While there is not yet a vaccine for the coronavirus, the seasonal flu vaccine is widely available and can greatly reduce your risk of the seasonal flu.

Why is the flu vaccine so important this year?

- Flu and COVID-19 share many symptoms. You may need COVID-19 testing for an accurate diagnosis.
- The seasonal flu and COVID-19 are highly contagious. With both viruses circulating at the same time, the risk of illness is correspondingly high.



- Both the flu and COVID-19 pose a risk of serious complications, with COVID-19 including some not associated with the seasonal flu.
- The most vulnerable parties to flu and COVID-19 are not always the same. Protecting yourself from the flu also helps protect your loved ones.
- High flu caseloads may overtax a health care system already stressed by COVID-19.
- The flu vaccine is the most effective way to decrease flu illness, hospitalizations and deaths.

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. While they share some characteristics, there are also key differences between the two. Although current data suggests that COVID-19 is deadlier than the seasonal flu, more evidence is needed to draw conclusions.

Who should get a flu vaccine?

With rare exceptions, an **annual** flu vaccine is recommended for **everyone aged 6 months or older**. The risk of serious complications from the flu is especially high for:

- Adults 65 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5 years
- Children with neurologic conditions
- People who are obese

and/or individuals with:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease and stroke
- Cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Asthma
- Chronic lung disease
- Kidney disease
- Liver disorders
- Metabolic disorders

Flu vaccines are reformulated each year to protect against the specific viruses likely to be most common during the flu season.

Vaccine Options

- Standard dose flu shots
- High-dose shots for people age 65 years and older
- Shots made without eggs
- Nasal spray vaccine

When is flu season?

While the exact timing of flu season varies from year to year, flu activity generally accelerates in October and peaks between December and February. The season often extends into May.

When should I get the flu vaccine?

To maintain good immunity through the entire flu season, September or October are among the best times for vaccination. Remember that it takes up to two weeks for the vaccine to become effective.

Nevertheless, missing the October target should not mean skipping the vaccine. It is important to pursue vaccination as long as the virus remains in circulation.

VaccineFinder.org can point you to vaccination locations.

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