



# Get a Flu Shot this Year – It's More Important Than Ever

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The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), public health officials and physicians have always recommended that everyone over 6 months of age receive the flu vaccine annually. With the added threat of COVID-19 resurging in the Fall and Winter season, it's never been more important to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Both the flu and COVID-19 are respiratory illnesses that can lead to hospitalization for pneumonia and other serious, sometimes life-threatening complications. The elderly are especially vulnerable. Flu vaccines can help prevent people from getting sick with the flu – and lower the risk of hospitalization and death caused by the flu.

Even if the flu vaccine is not a perfect match for the virus that causes the flu, a CDC-supported study indicates it's still worth it. According to the research conducted over multiple flu seasons, people who got the flu vaccine and still got sick had a 37% reduced risk of being admitted to the hospital for treatment and reduced their risk of admission to an intensive care unit by 82%. This is especially important with the increased risk of contracting COVID-19 in the hospital.

## Plenty to Go Around

Vaccine makers estimate there will be a record number of flu vaccine doses – almost 200 million - available this flu season, according to the CDC. The best time to get the vaccine is in September or October. After you get the vaccine, it takes about 2 weeks for your body to develop protection against the flu. That's why it's a good idea to get the vaccine before the flu starts to spread in your community. It reduces your risk of getting sick with the flu by 40% to 60%. And, the more people who receive the vaccine, the better the chances we can prevent a large community outbreak. But it's never too late in the season to get the shot. Keep in mind that flu season can last as late as May.

## Universal Precautions

The things we are already doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 – wearing a mask, keeping physically distant, regular handwashing, and staying home – may also help slow the spread of flu. But, when an effective, safe, and accessible vaccine for the flu exists, there's no better way to stop the spread of a serious illness.

## How to Get Vaccinated

The flu vaccine is covered by all health insurers, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, without any cost share for members, and can be administered in your primary care physician's office, urgent care center, or pharmacy. For more information on where you can get a flu vaccine, visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/>.

Remember, the flu spreads easily from person to person. When you get a flu vaccine, you don't just protect yourself. You also protect everyone around you.

