

There is still time to protect against flu

The holidays are here, and while that means more opportunities for spreading cheer, there is also more opportunity for spreading flu and other respiratory viruses as people resume travel and gather with family and friends. National Influenza Vaccination Week (Dec. 5-11) is an important reminder to check off one thing no one should go through the holiday season without: a [flu vaccine](#).

Flu activity during the 2020-2021 season was very low, likely because of COVID-19 prevention measures – and it's important to know that immune protection against flu decreases over time, so many people may have reduced immunity to flu this season. As we celebrate this holiday season, health experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are particularly concerned about the impact reduced immunity could have on people who are already at higher risk of developing serious flu complications, including those with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, heart disease and diabetes.

“CDC estimates that only about half of adults 18 to 64 years of age with at least one chronic health condition received a flu vaccine last season,” Dr. Michael Jhung, a medical officer with CDC’s Influenza Division, said. “This means many people who are most vulnerable to getting very sick with flu are not getting the protection they need.”

While it is ideal to get a flu vaccine before flu starts spreading in your community, getting vaccinated later is still beneficial during most seasons. Flu most commonly peaks in February and significant activity can continue into May, so there is still time to get vaccinated if you haven’t already. This National Influenza Vaccination Week, go to your doctor or local pharmacy to get your flu vaccine, encourage your loved ones to get their flu vaccine, and learn more about [the benefits](#) of getting vaccinated against flu.

Did you know? Flu vaccines are the only vaccines that protect against flu

Flu and COVID-19 are different diseases caused by different viruses. Flu vaccines protect against the four flu viruses that research indicates will be the most common during flu season, and COVID-19 vaccines protect against the virus that causes COVID-19. One vaccine is not a substitute or a replacement for the other.

Both vaccines are recommended, and it’s important that people be up to date on their recommended flu and COVID-19 vaccines. In fact, a flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine can be given during the same visit, if the timing coincides.

Flu vaccines are critical for people with certain chronic health conditions

Adults with asthma, heart disease, diabetes and certain [other chronic health conditions](#) are at higher risk of developing potentially serious flu complications, including hospitalization or even

death. In past flu seasons, [9 out of 10 adults](#) hospitalized with flu had at least one reported underlying medical condition.

“Even more concerning is that heart disease and diabetes were the most common chronic conditions among hospitalized adults with flu during recent seasons — about half of adults hospitalized with flu had heart disease, and about 30% had diabetes,” Jhung said. “If you or a loved one has a chronic condition like asthma, heart disease, diabetes or had a stroke, please get your flu vaccine.”

Additionally, CDC’s [first estimates](#) for flu vaccine uptake among children and pregnant people so far this flu season are lower than the same time last season. This could be dangerous for many of the people in these groups as well who may also be at [higher risk](#) of developing serious flu complications. Flu vaccines can be [lifesaving](#) in children, and flu vaccination helps [protect pregnant people during pregnancy, as well as their baby for several months after birth.](#)

Flu vaccines are needed every year – and there’s still time to get vaccinated

Flu viruses are constantly changing, and multiple flu viruses can circulate at the same time during any given flu season. Because of this, flu vaccines are reviewed each year and updated as needed – in fact, two of the components included in this year’s vaccine were updated from last year to better match flu viruses that are expected to spread in the U.S. this season.

Getting an annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older and is the best way to help protect against flu. There’s still time for you and your loved ones to get vaccinated; get your flu vaccine today.

Additional information about the seriousness of [flu and the benefits of flu vaccination](#) can be found on the [CDC website](#) or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.