

September 21, 2021

## FLU SEASON IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER: NOW IS THE TIME TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH



As we turn the calendar to September, health departments in West Central Florida—Citrus, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota—strongly encourage residents older than six months of age to get their flu shot for the 2021-22 flu season. Flu vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu and its potentially serious complications.

With hospitals already handling a great number of patients suffering from COVID-19 infections, the flu vaccine can prevent hospitalizations during this time of crisis. For Florida flu statistics, please visit the Department's [Florida Flu Review](#) website.

Last year's flu season was exceptionally mild, primarily due to a high flu vaccine uptake, social distancing measures and mask wearing to combat the spread of COVID-19. With schools back in face-to-face sessions, many workplaces bringing their employees back to the office and people vaccinated against COVID-19 no longer wearing masks, the potential for a busy flu season is greater this year.

### Get the Flu Shot

The vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older, including pregnant women. Individuals that are at most risk for getting severely ill from the flu are young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease, and people aged 65 years and older.

It takes approximately two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend getting a flu vaccine every year because flu viruses evolve quickly, and last year's vaccine may not protect against the current year's strain. Even if the vaccine does not fully protect against the flu, it may reduce the severity of symptoms and the risk of complications.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention remind everyone that it is safe to receive your flu vaccine the same time as your COVID-19 vaccine, making it convenient to take care of both at the same time.

## **Where to Get the Flu Shot**

Most pharmacies and primary care physician offices offer flu shots. For information about the flu and to find other locations to get the seasonal vaccine, go to [www.FluFreeFlorida.com](http://www.FluFreeFlorida.com).

## **Healthy Habits to Help Prevent Flu**

Good health habits like washing your hands can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing may prevent those around you from getting sick. Make it a habit to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces in your home, school or office.

Flu vaccines and good hand hygiene are still the go-to recommendations for prevention; however, public health officials say it's just as important to contain the virus, and that means staying home when you're sick.

## **About the Florida Department of Health**

The Department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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