

# 2020–2021 Flu Season

## Frequently Asked Questions



### I WANT A FLU SHOT

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#### **Where can I get a flu shot?**

Flu shots are available in the community at most doctor's offices, at most retail pharmacies, and through Monterey County Public Health vaccination clinics. Visit [chomp.org/flu](http://chomp.org/flu) for the latest information on where you can find a clinic.

#### **When is the best time to receive influenza vaccination?**

The best time to receive influenza vaccination is prior to seeing influenza cases in the community. Early fall – September and October – is an excellent time-period to get vaccinated against influenza as influenza activity is most common in the fall and winter months and typically peaks between December and February.

#### **How long does it take to have protection from the flu after getting a flu shot?**

Approximately 10 to 14 days.

#### **Do other viruses circulate during the influenza season?**

Yes. Several other viruses circulate during the influenza season and can cause illness. This year we are experiencing COVID-19 which is going to be present during the influenza season.

#### **Who should receive an annual influenza vaccination?**

The CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends almost everyone 6 months and older and those who are high risk for complications get vaccinated annually.

#### **I have a cold. Can I still get a flu shot?**

People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting the flu vaccine. If you are ill, check with your doctor. People with mild illness can usually get the vaccine.

## AVOIDING THE FLU

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### What else can I do to avoid getting the flu?

- Don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your elbow, or your sleeve
- Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, and exercise.
- Stay home with flu-like symptoms (temperature of 100.5 F or higher, plus cough or sore throat).
- Get vaccinated at your doctor's office, Monterey County Public Health vaccination locations, or at a retail pharmacy. Most health plans pays for flu vaccinations.
- Wear a mask in public.

### How does influenza virus spread?

Influenza is spread mostly by droplets of respiratory secretions made when people who are infectious cough, sneeze, sing, and talk. The droplets can enter another unprotected person's mouth or nose or possibly be inhaled in to the lungs. Less often, influenza is spread by touching a surface or object contaminated with influenza virus.

### When is someone contagious with influenza?

Individuals with influenza are most contagious in the first 3–4 days after their illness begins. Individuals can infect others 1 day before showing symptoms and remain infectious 5–7 days after the onset of symptoms. Those with weakened immune systems may be able to pass on the virus for longer than 7 days.

## I'M UNCERTAIN — WHY SHOULD I GET VACCINATED, AND HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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### Why is it important for healthcare workers to be vaccinated?

- Influenza is a serious respiratory disease. In an average year, 36,000 Americans die from influenza-related causes.
- Some people with influenza have no symptoms, increasing the risk of transmission to others. Also, the influenza virus may be shared for 24 hours before symptoms begin, increasing the risk of transmission.
- It is more important now than ever to protect yourself and others from the flu, not only for you and your household, but for the entire community.
- Influenza vaccination reduces hospitalizations and death, reduces severity of illness, reduces the risk for major cardiac event, and protects pregnant women and babies.

### Where can I get more information about the flu vaccination?

Visit [chomp.org/flu](http://chomp.org/flu) or visit [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu).

### What is "herd" immunity and why is it important?

Herd immunity occurs when 80% or more of a given population has immunity against a disease, thus significantly slowing the rate of transmission and protecting the entire "herd."

## SAFETY, COST, WHO CAN BE VACCINATED, AND MORE

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### Can the flu shot give me the flu?

The influenza vaccine cannot give you the flu. It may seem like you can get the flu from the shot because:

- The vaccine is designed to stimulate your immune system, and symptoms of that immune system stimulation can be similar to a mild flu-like illness with fatigue, body aches or even low grade fevers.
- You may have been exposed prior to vaccination but before symptoms
- You may be exposed during the two weeks immediately following your vaccination before your body has built up immunity
- You may be exposed to a flu strain not covered by the vaccine

Also, vaccination does not prevent all disease; however, the severity of the symptoms will be less when one has had the flu shot.

### Are there side effects associated with influenza vaccination?

Common side effects may include soreness at the injection site, headache, fever, nausea, and muscle aches. These are often self-limiting and mild.

## INFLUENZA AND COVID-19

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### Are there similarities between Influenza and COVID-19?

Both are contagious respiratory illness, but they are caused by different viruses. Some of the symptoms are very similar and it may be difficult to tell the difference.

### What are some differences between influenza and COVID-19?

Influenza symptoms usually come on suddenly 1–4 days after exposure where COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure. COVID-19 symptoms that are different from influenza are new loss of taste or smell.

### Does influenza and COVID-19 spread the same way?

Both can spread from person to person by respiratory secretion droplets when an individual coughs, sneezes, sings, or talks. Both are spread primarily by being in close contact with an infected person. Both viruses may also be spread by touching an unclean surface or object and then

### What does the flu vaccine cost?

Flu vaccines are available for free through most insurances (although it may not cover the cost of a doctor's office visit). They are also available for free through Monterey County Public Health vaccination clinics and at most pharmacies.

### Why do you need the flu shot every year?

The influenza virus changes often, making annual vaccination necessary. Immunity following vaccination lasts at least 12 months and is strongest for 2 to 6 months.

### Will this season's influenza vaccine be a good match for circulating viral strains?

There's no way to predict that with any certainty, because flu viruses are constantly mutating. But each vaccine is designed to protect people from the strains deemed most likely be prevalent in any given year.

### I am pregnant. Can I receive the seasonal flu shot?

The CDC highly recommends flu vaccinations during any stage of pregnancy. If you have questions or concerns, please check with your healthcare provider.

immediately touching your mouth, nose or eyes with unclean hands.

### Will getting the influenza vaccine increase or reduce the risk of getting COVID-19?

No. The two diseases are completely separate, and being immunized for one does not make you more susceptible or immune to the other.

### Does the influenza vaccine interfere with the body's ability to fight off COVID-19?

The seasonal influenza vaccine will not interfere with the body's ability to fight off COVID-19.

### Where can I find out more about influenza and COVID-19?

Visit [chomp.org/flu](https://chomp.org/flu) for more information and helpful resources.