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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATES ON FLU SEASON



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Tallahassee, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health (Department) encourages Floridians to get vaccinated against influenza (flu). After vaccination, it takes about 2 weeks for the body to develop protection. **Flu shots are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against the flu and its potentially serious impacts.**

During the 2019–2020 flu season, an estimated 20,000 deaths were caused by flu nationally, and 14 deaths in those younger than age 18 were reported in Florida. In recent weeks, flu activity has begun to increase in the state. It is important to take steps now to prevent the spread of flu in our communities.

Flu shots are offered at most health care provider offices, retail pharmacies, and urgent care facilities. Floridians can locate a flu shot near them by visiting the Department's [Locate a Flu Shot webpage](#).

To learn more about the flu, other vaccine-preventable diseases, and where to find a vaccine provider near you, visit ThePowerToProtect.org.

What is flu?

Flu is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. There are 2 main types of influenza viruses: Types A and B. The influenza A and B viruses that routinely spread in individuals (human influenza viruses) are responsible for seasonal flu each year.

Flu can cause mild to severe illness. Fever, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, and headaches are common symptoms. Some groups, such as older adults, young children, individuals who are pregnant, and those with certain health conditions, are at higher risk of serious flu complications.

How does flu spread?

Flu can spread through respiratory droplets made when individuals with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Symptoms can begin about 2 days (but can range from 1-4 days) after the virus enters the body. Additionally, some individuals with flu can be asymptomatic, meaning that they have no symptoms.

You may be able to pass on flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick:

- Those with flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after their illness begins.
- Some otherwise healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.
- Some individuals, especially young children and those with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others with the flu for an even longer time.

When is flu season?

While seasonal influenza viruses are detected year-round in the U.S., they are most common during the fall and winter. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons varies, but flu activity often begins to increase in October. Most of the time **flu activity peaks between December and February**, although significant activity can last as late as May.

What are the benefits of getting a flu shot?

Every flu season is different, and flu can affect everyone differently. It can mean a few days of feeling bad and missing work or result in more serious illness. Seasonal flu shots are designed to protect against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season.

All flu shots in the U.S. are “quadrivalent” vaccines, which means they protect against 4 different influenza viruses: an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and 2 influenza B viruses.

Getting a flu shot:

- Can keep you from getting sick with flu.
- Can reduce the risk of flu-associated hospitalization and death.
- Can reduce severity of illness in those who get vaccinated but still get sick.
- Is an important preventive tool for individuals with certain chronic health conditions.
- Helps protect individuals who are pregnant during and after pregnancy.
- Can be lifesaving in children.
- Can protect you and those around you.

For more information and key facts about seasonal flu shots, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [website](#).

What can be done to reduce the risk of getting flu?

In addition to getting a flu shot, the Department also recommends the following to help reduce your risk of getting the flu:

- Avoid close contact with those who are sick when possible.

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (without using fever-reducing medication) except for medical care or other necessities.
- [Wash hands](#) frequently and for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Use your tissue, sleeve, or elbow to cover your cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

If you do get sick with flu-like illness, call your health care provider and ask about **flu antiviral drugs**.

- Antiviral drugs are prescription medications that can make your illness milder or shorten the time that you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.
- Flu and COVID-19 have overlapping signs and symptoms. Testing can help distinguish between the diseases, but [health care providers should not wait for results before prescribing antivirals for priority groups](#), which include those who are hospitalized, have severe illness, or are at higher risk for flu complications.
- Antiviral drugs work best when they are started within 2 days of getting sick, so be sure to contact your health care provider right away.

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About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, 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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