

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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Dear Colleague:

The 2020–21 influenza season is quickly approaching, though the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact the health of Floridians. Influenza activity levels remained low throughout the summer months but are expected to increase as we head into the fall. The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) recommends that all people who are able to get vaccinated do so now. **We urge you to actively recommend and offer influenza vaccine to patients in your clinics who have not yet received their 2020–21 influenza vaccinations.**

Studies have shown that people are more likely to get vaccinated when it is recommended to them by their health care providers. Your strong endorsement is a critical factor that affects whether your patients choose to get an influenza vaccine. For more information on making a robust influenza vaccine recommendation, visit: www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/flu-vaccine-recommendation.htm. Influenza vaccination is recommended for all people aged 6 months and older, with only rare exception, for every influenza season. Though getting an influenza vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, getting an influenza vaccine this season is more important than ever to help reduce burden on the health care system and to protect vulnerable populations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends influenza vaccination be offered by the end of October, but stresses vaccination should continue throughout the influenza season as long as influenza viruses are circulating (even into January or later). Influenza seasons can vary dramatically in timing, with peak activity observed as late as March in recent seasons in Florida.

Contact your county health department (FloridaHealth.gov/CHDEpiContact) if:

- You suspect an outbreak of influenza or influenza-like illness (outbreaks are defined as two or more cases in a defined setting such as a school or long-term care facility).
- You suspect a death in a child may be associated with influenza infection.
- You see an unusually severe presentation of influenza.
- You think a patient may be infected with a novel influenza virus.
- You suspect antiviral drug resistance in a patient with influenza.
- You have questions about other respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

Seasonal influenza circulation patterns sometimes differ in Florida compared to the rest of the nation. Please visit FloridaHealth.gov/FloridaFlu for additional information and subscribe to FDOH's weekly influenza report, the *Florida Flu Review*, for regular updates. If your practice is interested in further contributing to influenza surveillance in Florida, please reach out to your local county health department for information on how to become a sentinel provider in Florida's ILINet program. Thank you for your important contribution to protecting Floridians from influenza!

Sincerely,

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Director
Division of Disease Control & Health Protection
State Epidemiologist

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