

## **Getting a Flu Shot is Critical During COVID-19 Pandemic**

Getting a flu shot is always important, but reducing illness and hospitalization from flu is critical this year to protect frontline healthcare workers as they continue to care for people with COVID-19.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, last flu season, 42% of Wisconsinites received at least one dose of flu vaccine, leaving nearly two-thirds of people at higher risk of getting the flu. During Wisconsin's 2019-2020 influenza season, there were 36,175 flu cases reported, 4,425 flu-related hospitalizations, and tragically, 183 deaths, including three children. Last year, we saw the highest number of pregnant women hospitalized for influenza.

Normally it takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to protect you against the virus and you should be making a plan to get you and your family vaccinated. It is one of the most important and proactive steps you can take to protect yourself and the people around you.

Both influenza and COVID-19 are respiratory illnesses, but until we have a vaccine against COVID-19, the best way to help prevent these two viruses from circulating at the same time is to get your flu vaccine now.

Some people may be scared or nervous to seek medical care at this time, but rest assured safety precautions related to COVID-19 are in place, including social distancing and sanitizing at hospitals and clinics, temperature checks, and special scheduling to accommodate people seeking care at this time. Calling and scheduling an appointment for a flu shot is the safest and best way to get access to a flu shot.

In addition, there are simple steps to stop the spread of COVID-19 that are also successful for warding off the flu. In addition to the flu vaccine, people should also:

- Stay home when they're sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash their hands frequently and thoroughly.

We all need to do everything possible to make a difference this flu season, so let's keep people flu-free while we focus on ending COVID-19.

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