

# 2020-21 INFLUENZA VACCINATION TALKING POINTS

FOR DRAFTING SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES, PRESS RELEASES, ARTICLES AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:

## **Getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community from flu.**

- Just like wearing a mask, getting a flu shot is an easy and safe action we can take to keep ourselves and others healthy during the pandemic.
- We may not have a vaccine for COVID-19 yet, but we do have one for flu that is effective and safe.
- It is likely that both COVID-19 and flu will be circulating this fall and winter. Getting immunized against flu means there is one less disease you and your doctor have to worry about this season.
- This season, getting a flu vaccine is especially important because it will protect against flu and help save limited medical resources for COVID-19 patients.
- Influenza and COVID-19 share many symptoms. Preventing influenza means fewer people will need to seek medical care and testing for possible COVID-19 or influenza.
- CDC estimates that flu causes hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and 12,000-61,000 deaths each season. While it's always important to minimize this toll, it's especially important this season. A bad flu season combined with COVID-19 can put our doctors, nurses, and others in the front lines at higher risk for illness. Overburdened hospitals may also have to turn people away for care.
- Essential workers, including nurses and doctors, are doing their part to keep us healthy. Now it's time for us to do our part by rolling up our sleeves and getting vaccinated.

## **Providers are taking every precaution to keep you safe, wherever you plan to get vaccinated.**

- We understand you may feel a little uneasy about coming into the doctor's office, pharmacy or flu clinic this year. Hospitals, clinics and other settings across the state have taken additional safety measures to ensure patients are safe when getting vaccinated.
- Additional safety measures include separating times for sick and healthy patients, masking requirements, additional disinfecting between appointments, physical distancing in waiting areas and many other precautionary measures to make sure patients stay safe. Some clinics offer drive-through clinics, where you can get care without leaving your car.

## **Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot, especially our most vulnerable community members.**

- Flu vaccination lowers the chances that children and adults will end up in the hospital when they catch the flu.
- Healthy adults can get very sick from flu, just like from COVID-19. Both are most dangerous for older adults, smokers, or anyone with a chronic condition like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease. Get a flu shot now – we are stronger together when we are all protected against flu.
- Flu can lower your body's defenses to other infections, including COVID-19. Older adults, smokers, or anyone with a chronic condition like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease are especially at risk. Don't take chances with flu – get your flu shot now.
- A flu vaccine also helps protect the frontline health care workers who will be caring for a lot of people sick with respiratory illnesses this fall and winter. Now it's time for us to do our part by rolling up our sleeves and getting vaccinated against the flu.

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- While flu vaccination is always important, this season getting vaccinated is even more important for certain people who are at higher risk of being exposed to, or developing serious flu and COVID-19 complications. This includes:
  - People 65 years and older, who account for the majority of hospitalizations and deaths from flu and COVID-19.
  - People with underlying medical conditions like lung disease, heart disease, neurologic disorders, weakened immune systems, and diabetes, who also are more likely to have serious flu and COVID-19 illness.
  - African Americans, Latinx and Native populations, who are disproportionately affected by diseases like asthma, diabetes, obesity, and other chronic conditions that can increase the risk for serious flu and COVID-19.
  - Caregivers in long-term care facilities—in addition to residents—who are in daily close contact with people who are most vulnerable to serious flu and COVID-19 illness and death.
  - Essential workers who have frequent interactions with each other and/or the public and are therefore more likely to be exposed to flu and COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older people, and people with certain chronic health conditions.

## **Don't Wait—Vaccinate!**

- We are stronger when we are all protected. Call your doctor to get your flu shot today.
- Get a flu shot now. If you become infected with COVID-19, you'll have to wait until you're well to get your flu vaccine.
- Make a flu shot appointment now to keep you and your family protected during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For those who are out of work or without health insurance, you can still get your child vaccinated. The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program offers free vaccines to families who cannot afford to pay for their children's vaccines (through 19 years of age). Similarly, the Vaccines for Adults (VFA) program offers free vaccines for eligible adults. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if they are a VFC or VFA provider. Visit [vaccinefinder.org](https://www.vaccinefinder.org) to find a place nearby to get your flu vaccine.