

Flu Shot Information Fall 2020

What is the flu?	2
How the Flu Is Different from COVID-19?	3
How to Protect Yourself From the Flu and Prevent the Flu	4
Why Getting the Flu Shot Is Important	5
Where to Get Flu Shots	6
Who should not get a flu shot and what to do?	7

This guide was compiled by members of the Yale Chapter of iCure Health.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to yaleicurehealth@gmail.com.

What is the flu?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death (CDC).

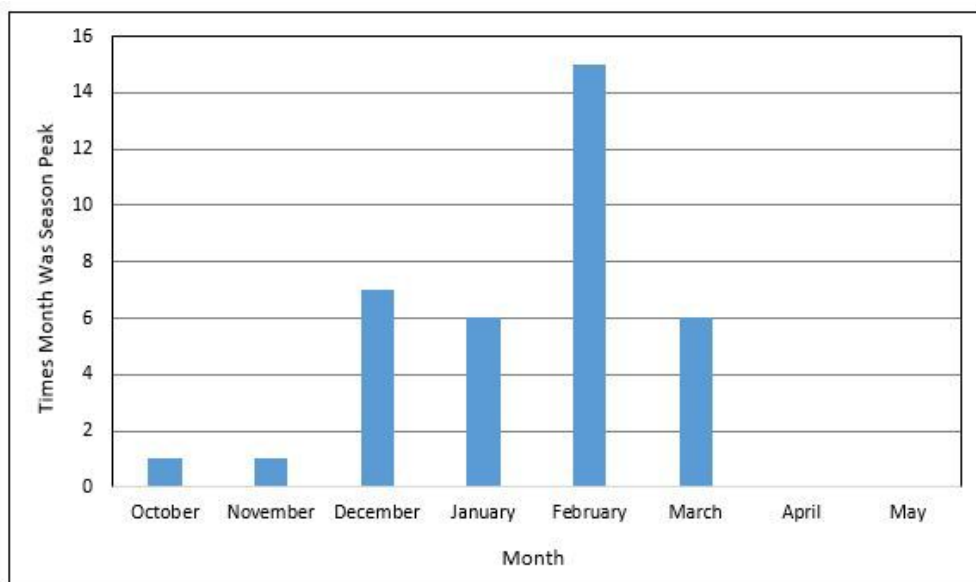
Symptoms include:

- fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

*It's important to note that not everyone with the flu will have a fever.

There are two main types of influenza (flu) virus: Types A and B. The influenza A and B viruses that routinely spread in people are responsible for seasonal flu epidemics each year (CDC).

Flu season normally runs from October to as late as May, with cases peaking between December and February.



(taken from <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season.htm>)

How the Flu Is Different from COVID-19?

	Flu	COVID-19
Symptoms	Fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, sore throat, headache, body aches	Fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, sore throat, headache, body aches, loss of taste/smell
Latent Period	1-4 days	2-14 days
How long is someone contagious?	Up to 7 days (infants and people with weakened immune systems may be contagious for longer)	Unknown as of now, it appears to be more contagious among certain populations and age groups and to have more superspreading events
How it spreads	Droplets made from coughing, sneezing, or talking that are inhaled by other people; touching surfaces with the virus and then touching his/her own mouth, nose, eyes; can spread from asymptomatic or symptomatic carriers	Droplets made from coughing, sneezing, or talking that are inhaled by other people; touching surfaces with the virus and then touching his/her own mouth, nose, eyes; can spread from asymptomatic or symptomatic carriers
High risk groups	Older adults, people with underlying medical conditions, pregnant women, younger children	Older adults, people with underlying medical conditions, pregnant women
Complications	Pneumonia, respiratory failure, crida injury, multiple organ failure, secondary bacterial infections	Pneumonia, respiratory failure, crida injury, multiple organ failure, MIS-C, secondary bacterial infections; blot clots in lungs, hearts, legs, or brain
Treatments	Influenza antiviral drugs	None approved as of now

How to Protect Yourself From the Flu and Prevent the Flu

The flu can be spread by coughing, sneezing, or having unclean hands. Therefore, the CDC recommends the following:

- Avoid Close Contact
 - Maintain space between yourself and people who are sick.
 - If you are sick, keep your distance from others to prevent further spread .
- Stay Home!
 - Prevent the spread of the flu to others by staying home from work, school, and other public spaces.
- Cover your Mouth and Nose
 - If you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
 - This will help prevent the spread of germs
- Clean your hands
 - Protect yourself from germs by washing your hands with soap and water (look at infographic below for recommended technique)
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are an acceptable alternative
- Other Tips
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in places of residence, school, or the workplace
 - Get sleep, do physical activity, eat nutritious meals, and drink plenty of fluids
 - This will strengthen your immune system to combat illness!

The Ins and Outs of Handwashing



Why Getting the Flu Shot Is Important

According to the CDC, the flu affects between 3 and 11 percent of the U.S. population each year which equates to between 9.3 million and 49 million people. The symptoms of the flu can keep you bedridden for a week or more which can negatively impact school attendance, worker absenteeism, and daily productivity. Even though most people only have mild illness and can recover, 140,000 -800,000 get hospitalized and 12,000 – 61,000 die from serious flu illness each year. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself against the flu.

Flu vaccines in general have been shown to have various important benefits (CDC):

- It reduces the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death for children, working age adults, and the elderly.
- It can help prevent the condition of those with chronic health problems including diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, etc. from worsening.
- It helps protect women during and after pregnancy
- It reduces the severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick with the flu.
- It helps protect the people around you, especially those who are more vulnerable to serious flu sickness such as babies, children, the elderly, and those with chronic health issues.

It is very likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread this fall and winter. Healthcare systems, which have already experienced shortages of hospital beds, ICU beds, and ventilators due to the pandemic, may again face shortages and be overwhelmed during this time. This then limits their ability to treat and care for people who are seriously ill with the flu, COVID-19, or both. Contracting the flu and COVID-19 is possible and, according to certain studies, can cause more complications than if the person had either disease alone. That's why it is especially important to get a flu shot during the 2020-21 year.

Where to Get Flu Shots

To find a location to get the flu shot, you can visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/>, which provides nearby locations anywhere in the United States.

- At the home page, select “Find Vaccines.”
- Select the type of flu shot (most likely Flu Shot 18+)
- Enter the zip code of your location and search area
- Check nearby locations by clicking on them
- Be careful to check the locations because some say “Please call to confirm vaccine supply,” and the phone number is listed. OR they may say “Sorry, none of the vaccines you searched for are currently provided.”
- Double check if certain locations require you to make an appointment before going

These locations are often urgent care clinics, pharmacies, or supermarkets, retailers, and public libraries. You may also get a flu shot from your doctor’s office if that is more convenient for you.

If you have insurance:

Your flu shot should be covered for free or you should have minimal out of pocket fees.

If you do not have insurance:

You most likely will have to pay out of pocket. Flu shots can range from about \$20-70 on average, depending on the location. You should look for above locations to check what policies each location follows. You may also want to look into available coupons for that location.

You can also look if your employer provides flu shots for free if you are currently working.

This site provides websites you can check out to see if you are able to find a federally-funded health center or other locations to obtain the flu shot for a lower price.

<https://www.vaccines.gov/get-vaccinated/pay>

Who should not get a flu shot and what to do?

Most people are eligible for a flu shot and would greatly benefit from one. There are some people that should not get one. If you have any concerns, you should contact your healthcare provider.

People who should not get a flu shot include:

- Children under 6 months of age
- If you have severe, life-threatening allergies to any component of the vaccine, including gelatin and antibiotics.
- Double check if the flu shot is safe if you have an egg allergy.

People should not get a nasal vaccine spray if they are:

- Under 2 years of age
- 50 years or older
- Pregnant
- Have asthma
- Immunocompromised
- Check the source for full list

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/whoshouldvax.htm>)

If you cannot get a flu shot, you can practice preventive measures, including practices listed above, washing your hands, etc.