

Illinois Department Of Public Health Reminds Illinoisans It's Time To Get A Flu Shot

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SPRINGFIELD – Every season the flu sickens millions of people in the U.S., hospitalizes hundreds of thousands, and kills tens of thousands. This season, in addition to the flu, the state continues to battle COVID-19. More than 41 million cases of

COVID-19 in the U.S. have been reported, including more than 1.5 million in Illinois. More than 660,00 COVID-19 deaths have been reported in the U.S. with more than 24,400 deaths reported in Illinois.

“Because of the effectiveness of masking in preventing virus transmission, we saw fewer flu-related ICU hospital admissions in Illinois and no flu-related pediatric deaths,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “However, with inconsistent mask usage, we could see a more severe flu season along with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Now is the time to get your flu shot. Flu vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time if you haven’t already gotten your COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines are our best protection against severe illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths due to either flu or COVID-19.”

Everyone six months of age and older is recommended to get the seasonal flu vaccine. All flu vaccines this season are quadrivalent, meaning they will offer protection against four flu strains – an H1N1-like strain, H3N2-like strain, and two B strains. More information on the types of flu vaccine, as well as recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, can be found on the CDC website.

Many of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are the same, but there are some differences. Flu usually comes on more suddenly, a person with COVID-19 can be contagious for a longer period of time compared to flu, and COVID-19 seems to cause more severe illnesses in some people overall. If you have symptoms of either flu or COVID-19, self-isolate and contact a health care provider who can talk with you about testing and other measures you should be taking.

Both COVID-19 and flu can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe symptoms. Common symptoms that COVID-19 and flu share include:

- **Fever or feeling feverish/having chills**
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Fatigue (tiredness)**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny or stuffy nose**
- **Muscle pain or body aches**
- **Headache**
- **Vomiting and diarrhea**
- **Change in or loss of taste or smell, although this is more frequent with COVID-19.**

In addition to getting your flu and COVID-19 vaccine, IDPH recommends staying home when sick, wearing a mask, and frequently washing your hands. These everyday health practices will help protect against becoming infected with either flu or COVID-19 viruses.

Influenza antiviral drugs can be a second line of defense for people who get sick with the flu. Many studies have found that in addition to lessening the duration and severity of symptoms, antiviral drugs can prevent flu complications.

To find a location to get a flu shot in your community, check with your health care provider, local health department, and area pharmacies. More information about [influenza](#) can be found on the IDPH website at www.dph.illinois.gov. More information about COVID-19 can be found at www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19.