

# Health and Welfare Alert



## Flu Prevention

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**This year, it is more important than ever to protect yourself and those you care for from getting influenza (flu). The best way to prevent the flu is to get the vaccine. You can also help reduce the strain on hospitals and health care systems by getting vaccinated.**



Watch Dr. Sorg's Medical Moment  
Flu Season and COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends getting a flu vaccine as soon as possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts fear people may get infected with both the flu and COVID-19 at the same time. While CDC recommends getting flu shots before the end of October, getting a late flu shot can be better than not getting one at all. The flu vaccine is the single best way to prevent the flu and any related complications.

Ohioans with developmental disabilities may be at a higher risk for the flu due to chronic lung conditions like asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. The risk of aspiration may be increased due to difficulty swallowing, gastroesophageal reflux disease, seizure disorder, tube feeding, cerebral palsy, and suppressed or absent cough or sneeze reflex. In fact, 9 out of 10 people hospitalized with the flu had at least one underlying health condition.



Please make a plan to ensure that everyone who is able receives the flu vaccine early. If you need assistance finding where to obtain the flu vaccine, you can contact the medical provider, the county board QA Nurse, your [local health department](#), or search [Vaccine Finder](#) for availability in your area. Free vaccines are offered by some health departments, insurance plans, and pharmacies.



### How Flu Spreads

Most experts believe flu viruses are spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get the flu by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

### Flu Symptoms

The flu can cause mild to severe illness and, at times, can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- fever\* or feeling feverish/chills,
- cough,
- sore throat,
- runny or stuffy nose,
- muscle or body aches,
- headaches,
- fatigue (tiredness),
- and some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever. If someone is exhibiting these symptoms, please contact their doctor.

### Fast Facts

- Ohioans with developmental disabilities were hospitalized 799 times for pneumonia and flu in 2020 and were 13 percent of all unanticipated hospitalizations or major unusual incidents (5,965).
- While vaccine effectiveness can vary, recent studies show that flu vaccination reduces the risk of flu illness by between 40 and 60 percent among the overall population according to CDC.

### **Help be a flu fighter! When you are talking to your physician about the flu vaccine, see if the pneumonia vaccine is appropriate.**

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness. Older adults and people with other respiratory illnesses are at a higher risk for pneumonia. Common signs of pneumonia include cough, fever, trouble breathing, fast heartbeat, shaking, or chills. Call a doctor or get assistance immediately if a person is experiencing signs of pneumonia.

### Prevention Tips

In order to avoid the flu:

- stay home when sick,
- cover coughs and sneezes,
- mask up,
- lather up (wash your hands often),
- sleeve up to get your flu vaccine,
- use infection control procedures,
- frequently clean surfaces like,
- doorknobs, handles, and tables,
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth,
- get enough sleep, exercise, and avoid stress,
- drink plenty of fluids,
- and avoid close contact with sick people.

### Resources

[CDC Flu Facts](#) | [Flu Fighter Tools](#)