



Responses to Questions About Flu During COVID-19 Pandemic

Why is getting a flu shot especially important during the COVID pandemic?

Now more than ever, getting a flu shot is the most important way for you and your loved ones to protect against getting very sick, being hospitalized, or even dying from influenza. During the 2019-2020 flu season, the CDC estimates that between [410,000 - 740,000 Americans were hospitalized](#) because of flu (CDC, 2020). More people getting flu vaccine means fewer hospitalizations, allowing patients with COVID-19 to get the immediate care they need.

Also, flu and COVID-19 look very similar, and catching either could mean having to get tested for both. Delays in testing and diagnosis could lead to delays in getting appropriate treatment.

Will a flu shot prevent COVID-19?

Getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, however flu vaccination has many other important [benefits](#). Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization and death.

Also, a [study](#) from Brazil suggests that flu vaccine offers about 27% protection against death from COVID-19 (Fink et al. 2020). So it's possible that if you catch COVID-19, a flu shot could give you some extra protection.

Since I'm social distancing and wearing a mask, do I still need a flu shot?

Yes. In addition to wearing a mask, social distancing and washing your hands, getting a flu shot is another easy thing you can do to protect yourself and others around you from respiratory diseases.

I'm not worried about flu (only about COVID-19)

Severe flu is very unpredictable. It is most dangerous for young children, older adults, smokers, or persons with asthma, diabetes, or heart disease, but can also

strike healthy people. I get a flu shot and so do my (kids, spouse, insert other loved ones, as applicable)

If you catch the flu, it could weaken your body's immune system and increase your risk of other infections, including COVID-19. This was one of the reasons why I got my flu shot, and I urge you to get a flu shot, too.

Also, if you become infected with COVID-19, [you'll have to wait until you're well to get your flu vaccine](#) (CDC, 2020). At that point, your body's defenses are down, and you could be more vulnerable to the flu.

Do flu vaccines even work?

Flu vaccine effectiveness varies by age group, health status, and by season. The latest from the CDC estimates that [flu vaccine is about 40-60%](#) effective (CDC, Jan 2020)--far better than just not getting one and taking your chances.

Beware of early flu vaccine effectiveness forecasts. We really don't know how effective any year's flu vaccine will be until the Spring or Summer. For example, news stories in autumn 2017 that predicted a "terrible match" (around 10% effective) turned out not to be true—it was [40%, even up to 65% effective](#) that year. But unfortunately, a lot of people wondered if a flu shot was even worth it. I'm here to say yes, it's worth it. It can save your life.

For children:

Flu vaccine makes it [74% less likely your child will end up in a hospital intensive care](#) (Ferdinands et al., 2014), and [65% less likely to die from flu](#).(Flannery, 2017) Flu vaccine protects over half (55%) of children who get it, so it is much less likely for you [to have to bring your child back in to the doctor after getting a flu vaccination](#). (AAP Feb 2020)

For adults:

Research studies show that flu vaccinations can significantly lessen the severity of the flu if you do get it. For example, if you do catch the flu, you're much [less likely \(59% reduction\) to need hospital or ICU care](#), (Thompson, 2018) and much [less likely to die \(52% -79% reduction\)](#) (Arriola, 2017)

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