**Flu Season 2022-2023 Key Messages**

**Michiganders are encouraged to get both the flu and COVID vaccines, and any other routine vaccinations, in a single visit.**

* It is easy, convenient, and most importantly, safe to receive your flu vaccine, COVID vaccine, or other routine vaccines during the same visit.
* Getting a flu shot this fall will protect you and your family from the flu, which is especially important while there are still new COVID cases every day.
* Annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older, with [few exceptions](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/whoshouldvax.htm).
* At a time when our healthcare system is already stressed, it’s important that we avoid outbreaks of preventable potentially deadly diseases, like the flu.
* This pandemic can be overwhelming and scary for parents. Getting your child a flu shot is one step you can take now, to protect them from a serious disease.
* There is currently ample supply of flu vaccine available at many locations throughout Michigan, including doctors’ offices, pharmacies, and local health departments.

**Let’s clear up some misunderstandings about the flu.**

* ***Yes, the flu is dangerous.***
  + The flu leads to anywhere from 140,000 to 810,000 hospitalizations and 12,000 to 61,000 deaths each year, according to [CDC data since 2010](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluvaxview/nifs-estimates-sept2020.htm).
  + The flu is especially serious for young children, older people and people with chronic health conditions like asthma and diabetes.
  + Hundreds of children die from the flu each year. During the 2019-2020 flu season, six Michigan children, nationally 199 children, lost their lives to the flu. ([Source](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/MIFluFocus_1_5_06_146893_7.pdf))
* ***Despite a mild flu season last year, the flu is not gone.***
  + While last year’s flu season may have been milder due to COVID precautions like masking and social distancing, medical experts are concerned about two serious respiratory viruses (SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID-19 — and the flu) spreading in our communities as COVID mitigation measures have been relaxed, at a time when hospitals are already stressed.
* ***No, you can’t get the flu from the flu shot.***
  + The flu shot does not have a live virus in it, so you can’t get the flu from the flu shot.
  + Most people experience no side effects from the flu shot. The most common side effects are soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given.
  + Sometimes people may also develop a low-grade fever, headache, and muscle aches. These side effects are signs that your body is developing the immunity it needs to fight off the flu.
  + The side effects people have to the flu vaccine are less severe and shorter lasting than the symptoms caused by actual flu illness.
* ***Yes, the flu shot works, but it takes two weeks to develop immunity.***
  + You shouldn’t wait for flu activity to rise or become high in your community to get a flu vaccine.
  + September and October are generally [good times to be vaccinated](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccinations.htm#when), since the flu normally peaks in December and January.
  + Some children 6 months through 8 years of age will need two doses of flu vaccine. These children should receive their first dose as soon as possible after the vaccine becomes available to allow the second dose to be received ideally, by the end of October. Talk to your child’s health care provider to find out if your child needs two doses of flu vaccine this season.
  + Persons who are not vaccinated by the end of October can and are still recommended to receive a flu vaccine.
  + There is a chance you could still get the flu even after you’ve been vaccinated, but getting a flu vaccine makes it less likely that you’ll get seriously ill or need to be hospitalized.
* ***No, that stomach bug isn’t the same thing as the flu.***
  + Many people use the term “stomach flu” to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, but this isn’t caused by the influenza virus. These symptoms are caused by many different viruses, bacteria or even parasites.
  + While these symptoms can sometimes be related to the flu — more commonly in kids than adults — these problems are rarely the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease. [Symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/symptoms.htm) usually appear suddenly and include fever, sore throat, cough, headache, chills, and muscle aches.
* ***A flu vaccine won’t protect you from COVID-19, and a COVID vaccine won’t protect you from the flu.***
  + The flu vaccine is designed specifically to protect you from certain strains of the flu, and the COVID-19 vaccines are designed specifically to protect you from COVID-19 infection. While some of the symptoms of the flu and COVID-19 are similar, the viruses that cause the flu and COVID-19 are completely different.
  + If you haven’t received your COVID-19 vaccine yet and are eligible, you can get your annual flu shot at the same time.
* ***No, getting a flu shot won’t increase your risk of getting COVID-19.***
  + There is no evidence that getting a flu vaccination raises your risk of getting sick from COVID-19 or any other coronavirus.
  + The flu vaccine doesn’t overload your immune system. Vaccines contain ingredients called antigens, which tell your body's immune system to create antibodies to help recognize and fight off specific viruses. Vaccines contain only a tiny fraction of the antigens that we encounter every day in our environment, even if we receive several vaccines on one day.
  + And even though children receive more vaccines to protect against more diseases now compared to 30 years ago, the actual number of antigens in vaccines is dramatically less than decades ago because vaccine technology has improved, making vaccines more efficient. In 1980, the recommended vaccines contained more than 15,096 antigens. Today's vaccines contain only 173 antigens in 12 vaccines that protect children and teens against 16 vaccine-preventable diseases.

**6 benefits of getting a flu shot**

1. **Flu vaccination can keep you from getting sick with the flu.**
   * Flu vaccination prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related doctor’s visits each year. For example, during [2019-2020](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden-averted/2019-2020.htm) flu vaccination prevented an estimated 7.5 million influenza illnesses, 105,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations, and 6,300 influenza-associated deaths.
   * Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor due to the flu by 40 to 60 percent. ([Source](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines-work/effectiveness-studies.htm))
2. **Flu vaccination helps keep you and your loved ones out of the hospital.**
   * Flu vaccination prevents tens of thousands of hospitalizations each year. For example, during 2019-2020 flu vaccination prevented an estimated 105,000 flu-related hospitalizations.
   * Flu vaccination reduced children’s risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) admission by 74 percent during flu seasons from 2010-2012. ([Source](https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/210/5/674/2908613))
   * In recent years, flu vaccines have reduced the risk of flu hospitalizations among adults by about 40 percent. ([Source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28935236))
3. **If you do get sick with the flu, flu vaccination can make it less severe.**
   * A 2018 study showed that among adults hospitalized with flu, vaccinated patients were 59 percent less likely to be admitted to the ICU than those who had not been vaccinated. Among adults in the ICU with flu, vaccinated patients on average spent four fewer days in the hospital than those who were not vaccinated. ([Source](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X18309976?via%3Dihub))
   * A 2017 study showed that flu vaccination reduced deaths, ICU admissions, ICU length of stay, and overall duration of hospitalization among hospitalized flu patients. ([Source](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/vaccine-reduces-severe-outcomes.htm))
   * Flu vaccination among adults reduced the risk of being admitted to an intensive care unit (ICU) with flu by 82 percent, during flu seasons from 2012 to 2015. ([Source](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/vaccine-reduces-risk-severe-illness.htm))
4. **Flu vaccination can save children’s lives.**
   * Flu vaccination reduced the risk of dying from the flu by half (51 percent) among children with underlying high-risk medical conditions and by nearly two-thirds (65 percent) among healthy children, according to a 2017 study. ([Source](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p0403-flu-vaccine.html))
5. **Flu vaccination helps protect women during and after pregnancy.**
   * Vaccination reduces the risk of flu-associated acute respiratory infection in pregnant women by up to one-half. ([Source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=24280090))
   * A 2018 study showed that getting a flu shot reduced a pregnant woman’s risk of being hospitalized with flu by an average of 40 percent. ([Source](https://academic.oup.com/cid/advance-article/doi/10.1093/cid/ciy737/5126390))
   * A number of studies have shown that in addition to helping to protect pregnant women, a flu vaccine given during pregnancy helps protect the baby from flu infection for several months after birth, when he or she is not old enough to be vaccinated. ([Source](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/qa_vacpregnant.htm))
6. **Flu vaccination helps prevent the flu in people with chronic health conditions.**
   * Vaccination has been associated with lower rates of some cardiac events among people with heart disease, especially among those who have had a cardiac event in the past year. ([Source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Association+Between+Influenza+Vaccination+and+Cardiovascular+Outcomes+in+High-Risk+Patients:))
   * Flu vaccination also has been shown in separate studies to be associated with reduced hospitalizations among people with diabetes and chronic lung disease. ([Diabetes source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2809006/), [Lung Disease source](http://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/712592/relation-between-influenza-vaccination-outpatient-visits-hospitalization-mortality-elderly-persons))