

Which Flu Vaccine Should My Children Get This Year?

By: Flor M. Muñoz, MD, FAAP

It's that time of year again— influenza (flu ([/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/The-Flu.aspx](#))) season is almost here! Many people don't realize it, but flu can be a very serious illness. It causes thousands of deaths in the United States every year, even among previously healthy children. With COVID-19 ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx](#)) expected to still be spreading this fall and winter, it is even more important to protect your child from viruses like influenza.



As a parent, the best thing you can do to protect your children from the flu is to get them vaccinated before influenza starts circulating in your community. All children age 6 months and older get their influenza vaccine by the end of October or sooner. Everyone around your children should be vaccinated, too.

What types of influenza vaccines are available?

For the 2021-2022 influenza season, there are two types of influenza vaccines available. The first is what many people call the "flu shot." The second comes as a nasal spray. All the vaccines available for children this year contain 4 influenza viruses (two A and two B viruses).

Should I get the shot or nasal spray for my child this year?

Both the AAP and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) want as many children as possible to get a flu vaccine every year. The AAP recommends that any licensed vaccine available this year and appropriate for a child's age and health status be given to children, with no preference. Both types of available flu vaccine (flu shot or nasal spray) can be given according to their indications, with no preference, for the 2021-2022 flu season.

Can my child get a flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time?

If your child is eligible ([/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/when-can-children-get-the-COVID-19-vaccine.aspx](#)) to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, it can be given at the same time as the flu vaccine, or at any time one after the other. Talk with your pediatrician about your child getting the flu vaccine along with other recommended immunizations.

What do we know about influenza circulating with COVID-19?

Last flu season was unusual, with physical distancing, mask-wearing, hand hygiene and other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 possibly doing the same for flu. However, flu and COVID-19 ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/How-is-the-Flu-Different-From-COVID-19.aspx](#)) are predicted to spread at the same time this winter. Getting a flu shot will help protect your child from one of these viruses.

If my child tested positive for COVID-19, should they get a flu shot?

Children with COVID-19 can still get a flu vaccine after they have recovered from their COVID-19 illness. Keep in mind that symptoms such as a stuffy and runny nose can make it hard to give the nasal spray vaccine.

How to Help your Family Fight Flu

Flu shots! Everyone 6 months and up should get a flu shot each year.

Here are other ways to #FightFlu:

- Wash hands frequently
- Sanitize toys
- Teach kids to cough in their elbow (like a vampire!)
- Keep kids home from school & child care if they have any flu symptoms



Keep your family and community healthy by getting vaccinated today!



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What about allergies to influenza vaccines?

A child who had an allergic reaction after a flu vaccine in the past should be seen by an allergist. The allergist can help parents decide if their child should receive their annual flu vaccination. A child with a known history of egg allergy can receive the flu vaccine.

Don't wait to get vaccinated!

When possible, children should get the flu shot in September or October. There's no need to wait, even if your child the previous year's flu vaccine in March or April. Influenza season typically peaks in February, so not too late to get the shot during winter or early spring. Children 6 months to 8 years of age should receive two doses if this is the first time they are being vaccinated against influenza, or if they have only received one dose of flu vaccine ever before July 1st, 2021.

Where should I go for my child's flu shot?

Your pediatrician knows your child best. The pediatrician's office has your child's health information, making it easy to keep track of the flu shot in your child's health record. Now more than ever, it is important to stay connected to your pediatrician (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-OK-to-call-the-pediatrician-during-COVID-19-even-if-Im-not-sure-my-child-is-sick.aspx>) and your medical home. Many pediatricians also offer flu shot clinics, including curbside and drive-through clinics. If your child must go somewhere else (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Why-should-my-son-get-flu-shot-at-pediatrician-vs-retail-based-pharmacy.aspx>) like a pharmacy, retail-based clinic or other place for a flu shot, parents should share the document they receive with the pediatrician.

Remember, getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your children, and other loved ones from the flu!

More information

- The Importance of Flu Vaccines as the COVID Pandemic Continues (/English/news/Pages/Influenza-Vaccines-Can-Protect-Children-against-the-Flu-During-Pandemic.aspx?_gl=1%2aiux4fd%2a_ga%2aMTMyMzY1NDM2OC4xNTE1MTA1ODA3%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aMTYzMTYyMDMwNS4yMDkuMS4xNjMxMTIwNjkkLjA.&_ga=2.150561654.1981336151.1630982398-1323654368.1515105807)
- The Flu (</English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/The-Flu.aspx>)
- Flu: A Guide for Parents of Children and Adolescents with Chronic Health Conditions (</English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Flu-A-Guide-for-Parents-of-Children-or-Adolescents-With-Chronic-Health-Conditions.aspx>)

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- [How Is the Flu Different From COVID-19? \(/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/How-is-the-Flu-Different-From-COVID-19.aspx\)](#)
- [Flu.gov \(http://www.flu.gov/\)](http://www.flu.gov/) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Ready Wrigley Prepares for Flu Season: Activity Book \(https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley/documents/ready_wrigley_flu.pdf\)](https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley/documents/ready_wrigley_flu.pdf) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

About Dr. Muñoz



Flor Muñoz, MD, MSc, FAAP, is associate professor of Pediatrics and Infectious Diseases at Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine. She is an investigator in various projects focusing on vaccines and the epidemiology of respiratory infections, including those supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She has published extensively on topics related to vaccines and influenza. Dr Muñoz is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Infectious Diseases (AAP COID) and of the American College of Gynecologists (ACOG) Immunization Expert Group. She also serves on the Influenza Work Group of the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

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