

Why you really should get a flu shot this year

31 August 2020, by Ileana Varela



John Delian, a certified medical assistant at the FIU Health Faculty Group Practice, readies a flu shot. Credit: Florida International University

Like Halloween decorations, flu shots are available a lot earlier this year. And doctors are encouraging everyone who can to get vaccinated.

It takes about two weeks after vaccination to build immunity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends getting a [flu vaccine](#) at the beginning of fall—in September or October—before flu season kicks into high gear.

"More than ever, because of the pandemic, people should get a flu shot," said Dr. Eneida Roldan, CEO of the FIU HealthCare Network. Roldan oversees the Student Health Services and FIU Health clinics. Both venues are already offering regular flu shots. Roldan expects higher-dose flu shots for seniors (over 65) will be available after

September 11 at the Faculty Group Practice on the MMC campus.

Why get a flu shot?

Flu shots neither prevent nor cause COVID-19, but they can help reduce the number of people who get the flu and need hospitalization. That's important.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans end up in the hospital every year because of the flu. If you add potential hospitalizations due to COVID-19, doctors fear a twindemic that could overwhelm the health system.

Also, if you get sick with the flu and have to go to the doctor or hospital, you run a higher risk of being exposed to someone infected with COVID-19.

"Both influenza and COVID-19 are respiratory illnesses. They have similar symptoms," said Roldan. "If you get sick and you were vaccinated against the flu, it could make it easier for your doctor to rule out the flu and tell if you have COVID-19."

Who should get vaccinated?

The CDC recommends everyone 6 months of age or older should get a flu shot unless there's a health reason why they shouldn't—like a history of allergic reactions to the [flu shot](#). Vaccination is especially important for high-risk groups: young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with chronic illnesses.

"Most people who get sick from the flu will have mild symptoms that will go away within a couple of weeks, but people at high risk can end up in the hospital—and even die," Roldan said.

Can I get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time?

Yes. Although both are caused by coronaviruses, they are different viruses, different illnesses. A double infection is possible in the same patient. Likewise, contracting one disease does not make you immune to the other.

Prevention tips

Flu shots are the best way to prevent influenza, but there is still no vaccine for COVID-19.

However, there are easy steps you can take to help prevent both.

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid close contact with known sick people
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes
- Keep a distance of at least 6 feet from people who don't live in your house
- Wear a mask when in public
- Stay home if you have any flu-like symptoms

Provided by Florida International University

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