

Advocate Aurora Health Living Well Community Conversation

FAQ: Flu Immunizations in Marginalized Communities of WI and IL

1. What is the importance of getting a flu shot?

A: Getting the flu shot is very important this season because there is also COVID-19. The flu is extremely serious, COVID-19 is also serious, so having both can be severe to your health. There have been cases of patients that have had both and have had severe complications. Getting the flu shot protects you and your loved ones. If you get your flu shot, we have, hopefully, eliminated the possibility of you having one of two serious viruses.

2. What are some misconceptions and myths on the flu shot, and why aren't people of color getting the flu shot?

A: Two common misconceptions and myths about the flu shot are, people think the flu shot gives you the flu, and the cost of the flu shot. The flu shot does not cause the flu and the cost of the flu shot is minimal. Most health insurance plans should cover it at 100%.

3. What are the barriers preventing our communities of color from receiving the flu shot?

A: Some barriers preventing our communities of color from receiving the flu shot are the availability of clinics where you can go get a flu shot, in addition to the hours of availability. However, over the year's healthcare providers have done a better job of ensuring flu shots are readily available in different spaces not just in clinics. Flu shots are now offered in many retail spaces inside the pharmacy. Additionally, many employers also offer flu shots at the workplace as well.

4. What should our community and families do now to prepare for this upcoming flu season to remain safe?

A: We should continue to do all the things we have been doing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 like wearing masks, washing hands and disinfecting surfaces consistently. Frequent hand washing for a minimum of 20 seconds is a key step in reducing the spread of both viruses.

5. Is there a certain time where you should get the flu shot? Is earlier better than later?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends getting the flu shot between September and October. Flu season typically begins late fall and provides protection for about six months.

6. What are some of the differences between the flu and a common cold?

A: A common cold usually comes with a low-grade fever, a runny nose and/or a slightly sore throat. With the flu you get high fevers, fatigue, and muscle aches.

7. If you have underlying conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, and you get COVID-19 and the flu season is coming, can you tell us how this escalates some of the issues, and why the flu shot helps deescalate?

A: When it comes to the vulnerable populations for influenza, they will mirror the same ones for COVID-19. The reason is because all these chronic conditions make you slightly more vulnerable to the viruses. When you get the flu shot it is protecting you and your vital organs from possible complications and damage.

8. What is the difference between symptoms of the flu and COVID-19?

A: The difference lies in terms of the complications and how it spreads. After you have been exposed to the flu you may get symptoms within 1-4 days, but with COVID-19 you may not have any symptoms for 5-14 days. Additionally, some people who have COVID-19 can be asymptomatic, meaning they show no symptoms. With the flu you may be contagious for a week after having symptoms, but with COVID-19 it can be anywhere up to 10 days.

9. Does getting the flu shot protect you from getting COVID-19?

A: It doesn't. However, getting the flu shot at least protects you from influenza.

10. Do we know if there is a test that can combine COVID-19 and Flu, so someone doesn't have to get a nasal swab multiple times to help determine if they have either one of these viruses?

A: There are combination tests that have been approved by the FDA under emergency use authorization to test for COVID-19 and Flu. However, currently these tests are not available at Advocate Aurora Health.

11. Has there been any connection to those who have received the Flu vaccines and decreased vulnerability to COVID-19?

A: There is no current data to demonstrate that obtaining a flu vaccine provides decreased vulnerability to COVID-19. Influenza and COVID-19 are two different viruses. However, the complications of getting either one can be severe. The CDC provides the following for reasons to get the flu vaccination while we are still battling COVID-19.

While getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, there are many important benefits, such as:

- 1. Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death.*
- 2. Getting a flu vaccine can also save healthcare resources for the care of patients with COVID-19.*

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12. Will the flu shot cost money if I go to Walgreens?

A: The cost of your flu shot will vary depending on your health insurance coverage plan. The average cash price in 2019 was \$30-70. If you are insured through the Affordable Care Act, Medicare Part B, or most other insurance plans, you will likely be able to get your flu shot for free at your doctor's office. Many employers and colleges offer free or discounted flu shots for their members. You can use <https://vaccinefinder.org/find-vaccine> to find a location for the flu shot.

13. How does someone who is afraid of needles get a flu vaccine?

A: Unfortunately, almost all the flu shots require an injection with a needle. There are a couple of exceptions. There is a nasal spray called *FluMist*, which is indicated for patients between 2-49 years old only. There is also *Afluria*, which is a needleless injection into a muscle via high speed injector. This is indicated for 18-64 year old patients only.

14. How does the Pneumonia Vaccine play into this discussion?

A: The pneumonia vaccine is available year-round. The CDC recommends pneumonia vaccinations for individuals who are 65 years of age or older, although sometimes those who have chronic lung, heart and autoimmune conditions may be encouraged to get the pneumonia vaccine before 65 years of age.

***We are delighted to have this opportunity to speak with you about some of your concerns related to Flu Immunizations and COVID-19. But, it's important to note the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing, rapidly developing situation. AAH encourages everyone to monitor publicly available information and to always follow federal, state and local health organization guidance and government mandates. This information is intended to answer questions you may have to the best of our ability. However this information may change depending upon the current situation.*