



Ascension

# Why it's Important to Get Your Flu Vaccine

## During Covid-19

Now, more than ever, it's important to get your flu vaccine for the upcoming flu season. As our flu season approaches, health experts warn that there is a risk of overburdening our hospitals, getting the flu and COVID at the same time and running out of testing reagents.

In a bad flu season, which usually peaks during December and February, some 40-50 million Americans can be infected with the flu virus. Of those, up to 800,000 will require hospitalization.

The concern with the onset of flu season is that we may have surges of both flu and COVID-19 cases, which could rapidly overwhelm the healthcare system. As both viruses affect the lung tissue, experts warn that you would not want to have both at once. Although it is possible, it's unknown how common co-infections will be. Unlike COVID-19, however, the flu is a familiar foe, and a safe and effective vaccine is available every year.

Both the flu and COVID-19 are especially hard on those who are elderly and have underlying health conditions. The flu, however, has been known to also affect children and can spread rapidly in schools and communities.

Experts recommend that you should get your flu vaccine before the end of October. Your body takes about two weeks to build immunity to the flu after receiving the vaccine. The flu vaccine is anywhere from 20-60% effective, depending on how closely scientists match the strains to the circulating influenza viruses. Even if it doesn't fully prevent you from getting the flu, your severity of illness can be greatly reduced. All of these are good reasons to get your flu vaccine every year, but it's especially important during the pandemic.

*Source: University of California San Francisco*