



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc
Commissioner

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DURING HISTORIC FLU VACCINATION CAMPAIGN, HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES PARENTS TO GET CHILDREN VACCINATED

*Recent flu vaccination data show a 26% increase in vaccination among adults
but a 6% decrease for children compared to the same period last season*

*While this flu season has been mild, all New Yorkers should get the flu vaccine
if they have not yet – the flu vaccine is safe and effective*

March 9, 2021 – The Health Department today announced that the City is on track to have a historic flu campaign this season, as over 2 million New Yorkers have received this season’s flu vaccine. While this flu season has been mild so far, everyone who can get the flu vaccine should still do so. Precautions to prevent COVID – such as wearing a face covering, distancing, handwashing and staying home – all work against influenza.

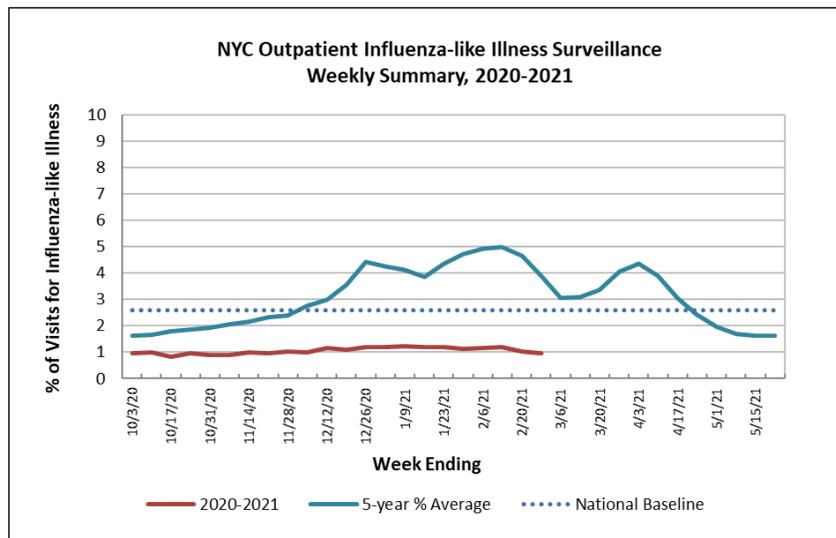
“COVID prevention like wearing masks and distancing also works against influenza – so we have New Yorkers to thank for this relatively mild season,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi**. “But as the saying goes, ‘it ain’t over, ‘til it’s over.’ Anyone who has not gotten the flu shot should still do so – and parents especially should get their children vaccinated as soon as possible.”

“Thanks to New Yorkers’ focus on doing the right thing when it comes to health and hygiene, our City has experienced historically low flu rates this winter,” said **Deputy to Mayor for Health and Human Services Melanie Hartzog**. “This bit of positive news reminds us just how important it is for all New Yorkers to remain vigilant and follow the guidelines to protect one another, because it works—and underscores how our City has risen to the challenge in so many important ways this past year.”

Flu vaccination data for this year’s flu season have shown continued increases for immunized adults compared to the same time last season. From July 1, 2020 – February 27, 2021, there was a 26% increase in the number of adults aged 19 and older who have received the vaccine compared to the same time last season (an increase of 262,485 adults [1,003,645 last season to

1,266,130 this season]). For children 6 months to 18 years old, there has been a 6% decrease (a decrease of 58,584 children [956,340 last season to 897,756 this season]). One notable factor this season is that far fewer children are in day care this year.

No influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported during the 2020-2021 season.



In addition, the proportion of patients presenting with Influenza-like Illness has been about 1%, which includes visits to both emergency departments and some outpatient providers, and is significantly lower than the historical average. Influenza-like Illness is defined as a fever at or above 100°F and cough and/or sore throat without a known cause other than influenza.

The City is on track to have a historic flu campaign this season, with more New Yorkers getting vaccinated than ever before. In total, over 2,160,000 New Yorkers have received this season’s flu vaccine based on doses entered into the Citywide Immunization Registry. However, since adults were only required to be reported to the Registry starting in December 2020, more doses have likely been given than captured. All New Yorkers older than 6 months of age should get a [seasonal flu](#) vaccine. It is especially important for adults 50 years and older, pregnant people, children 6 months to 5 years old, and people with underlying conditions to get vaccinated. The Health Department recommends people 65 years and older receive one of the two vaccines for this age group (high dose or adjuvanted vaccine).

The flu vaccine is widely available for all New Yorkers. Check with your regular health care provider to see if they have flu vaccine. Many community health centers and hospital clinics, along with all NYC Health + Hospitals clinics, provide no or low-cost flu vaccines. Flu vaccines are also widely available at chain pharmacies, like CVS, Rite Aid, Walgreens and Duane Reade, and at many independent pharmacies. Pharmacists can vaccinate children as young as age 2. Check with your local pharmacy to confirm if they provide flu vaccine and the age ranges they serve. New Yorkers can use the Health Department’s [NYC Health Map](#), call 311, or text FLU to 877-877 to find a flu vaccination location. There are 972 sites listed on Health Map which can be searched to find locations that serve people without insurance to find a free flu vaccination. The health department also provides a list of community flu vaccination events at [nyc.gov/flu](#). Flu vaccine is covered by most health insurance plans without a co-pay.

Flu season usually starts in the late fall and lasts throughout the spring. Since influenza activity can be unpredictable and influenza viruses can be found year-round, it is important to get the vaccine as early as possible, though it is never too late to be vaccinated. A flu vaccine is necessary each year because the vaccine provides protection for only one season. This year's flu vaccine contains four virus strains, three of which are new this year.

Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people, especially children, may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may also be infected with flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

The steps New Yorkers take to prevent COVID-19 are also applicable to flu. Face coverings, frequent hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available, distancing and staying home if ill can prevent the spread of flu.

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