



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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(347) 396-4177

THE MOST IMPORTANT FLU VACCINE YOU EVER GET

With COVID-19 still around, it is especially important to get the vaccine this year and the Health Department is launching a campaign to urge New Yorkers to get vaccinated

In normal years, there are about 2,000 deaths from seasonal influenza and pneumonia, which can develop as a complication of flu, which made it the third leading cause of death in NYC in 2017

September 15, 2020 – The Health Department today announced a [citywide campaign](#) to alert New Yorkers that "This year's flu vaccine could be the most important one you ever get." New Yorkers older than ages 6 months should get a [seasonal flu](#) vaccine and it is especially important for adults ages 50 and older, pregnant people, children ages 6 months to 5 years, and people with chronic diseases.

"The flu can be deadly even in normal years—and we know 2020 is not a normal year," said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. "Influenza continues to circulate in our communities, and it has many of the same symptoms as COVID-19. Our friends and neighbors, particularly the most vulnerable New Yorkers, are counting on everyone to get their flu vaccine."

The flu media campaign will run citywide, beginning on Monday, September 14, and will appear on subway (digital live boards), bus shelters, Staten Island Ferry, neighborhood business (check cashing facilities, laundromats and bodegas), newspapers, television, radio as well as digital and social media channels. Ads will run in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese and in additional languages for newspaper ads.

**THIS YEAR'S
FLU VACCINE
COULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT
ONE YOU EVER GET**

**WITH COVID-19 STILL AROUND, IT'S ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR
YOU TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES FROM GETTING
THE FLU AND NEEDING MEDICAL CARE. GET VACCINATED TODAY!**

ALL NEW YORKERS SHOULD GET THE FLU VACCINE, BUT ESPECIALLY:

Children under 5	If you are over 50	If you are or may be pregnant	If you have other medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease or HIV
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Flu vaccination is safe and quick and is covered by most insurance.
Flu vaccine is available at low cost or for free at many locations around the city.

For more information or to find a location to get your flu vaccine,
visit [nyc.gov/flu](#), call 311 or text "flu" to 877677.

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“This year it is more important than ever to get a flu shot and we hope everyone stays healthy. If you are sick – stay home – so you do not infect others,” said **Department of Consumer and Worker Protection Commissioner Lorelei Salas**. “New Yorkers are covered under the City’s Paid Safe and Sick Leave and do not have to choose between their paycheck and staying home to take care of themselves or a loved one. If you would like to file a complaint or have questions about sick leave go to nyc.gov/workers or call 311.”

New York City has obtained additional flu vaccine and will support expanded activities with the Department’s partners, such as NYC Health + Hospitals and community health centers to offer flu vaccine at COVID testing sites and on weekends.

Last year, according to preliminary data, there were five flu-related pediatric deaths in New York City and 187 nationally.

New York City has made considerable progress in getting younger New Yorkers vaccinated. Last flu season, children 6-59 months had flu vaccine coverage rate of 77%. However, rates drop off among older populations. Coverage for children aged 5 through 18 years was 48% according to Citywide Immunization data. According to Health Department data from a 2019 survey of New York adults, which mostly covers the 2018-2019 season, coverage is only 48%, with disparities among racial and ethnic groups for adults 18 and older. From our 2019 data, Black adults reported lower coverage at 43%, Hispanic adults were at 49%, White adults were at 51% and Asian/Pacific Islanders were at 49%. The City has made great progress in increasing coverage in older adults. Coverage among adults 65 and older increased from 63% in 2018 to 68% in 2019, with no difference in coverage by race or ethnicity. The Health and Human Services’ Healthy People 2020 goal for flu vaccination coverage is 70%.

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, hospitals along with H+H City-run clinics provide no or low-cost flu vaccines to patients as well as accept non-patients for flu vaccination. Flu vaccine is 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 are providing flu vaccine and if they vaccinate children and the age ranges they can 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. Flu vaccine is covered by most health insurance plans without a co-pay.

Influenza 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 three new virus strains.

Influenza-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 influenza and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

The steps New Yorkers take to prevent COVID are also applicable to influenza. 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 influenza. Additional ways to reduce the spread of germs like influenza:

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with influenza-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like influenza.

"Every New Yorker who can should get their flu vaccine as soon as possible," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "Getting vaccinated is one of the most important ways we can keep ourselves, our families, neighbors, frontline essential workers, and our city healthy and safe during this flu season. I commend Commissioner Chokshi for delivering this important and urgent message to New Yorkers by launching this campaign."

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MEDIA CONTACT: Patrick Gallahue / Michael Lanza
PressOffice@health.nyc.gov