



# MADISON COUNTY DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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## NEWS Release

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### It's Not Too Late to Get Protected from the Flu

This winter, when you see signs reading “Get Your Flu Vaccine,” you might ask, “Isn’t it too late to get vaccinated?” No, it’s not too late! CDC recommends that flu vaccination efforts continue throughout the flu season. While CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October, so that people are more likely to be protected against the flu when activity picks up in your community, vaccination into December and beyond can be beneficial during most flu seasons, including this one.

“Flu season most often peaks between December and March, but activity can occur as late as May,” says Katie Mungari, Madison County Director of Community Health. “We are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated this season to get vaccinated now.” It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, so it’s best to get vaccinated early.

For millions of people every season, the flu means a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue, and miserable days spent in bed. Millions of people get sick, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands to tens of thousands of people die from flu each year.

There is a vaccine that can help reduce the risk of flu and its potentially serious complications. While the vaccine varies in how well it works, there are many studies that show that flu vaccination reduces flu illnesses, doctor visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevents flu-related hospitalizations. A 2017 study showed that flu vaccination reduced deaths, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions, ICU length of stay, and overall duration of hospitalization among hospitalized flu patients. CDC estimates that during the 2016-2017 flu season, flu vaccine prevented approximately 5.3 million flu illnesses, 2.6 million flu-related medical visits and 85,000 flu-associated hospitalizations. However, fewer than half of the people in the United States reported getting a flu vaccine during that season; leaving millions of people unprotected. If just 5% more of the population had gotten



vaccinated during the 2016-2017 flu season, an additional 504,000 illnesses, 233,000 doctor's visits and 6,000 hospitalizations would have been prevented.

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal flu viruses. This season, CDC recommends that providers use any licensed, age-appropriate influenza vaccine (Inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV), Recombinant influenza vaccine (RIV), or live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV4)) with no preference expressed for one vaccine over another. The 2018-2019 U.S. flu vaccines have been updated for this season.

Some people are at high risk for serious flu-related complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death. People at high risk include pregnant women, children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old, people 65 year of age and older, and people who have certain medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. Vaccinating pregnant woman helps protect them from flu illness and hospitalization, and also has been shown to help protect the baby from flu infection for several months after birth, before the baby can be vaccinated. Flu vaccination has also been associated with lower rates of some cardiac events, such as a heart attack, among people with heart disease, especially among those who had had a cardiac event in the 12 months prior to flu vaccination.

For those at high risk of serious flu complications, getting a flu vaccine is especially important. It's also important to get the vaccine if you care for anyone at high risk, including children younger than 6 months who are too young to get a flu vaccine.

Some children 6 months through 8 years of age will require two doses of flu vaccine for adequate protection from flu. Children in this age group who are getting vaccinated for the first time will need two doses of flu vaccine, spaced at least 28 days apart. Some children who have received flu vaccine previously also may need two doses. Your child's doctor or other health care professional can tell you if your child needs two doses.

"Getting the flu vaccine is simple, and it's the most important thing you can do to protect yourself and your family from the flu," says Mungari. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years, and there has been extensive research supporting the safety of seasonal flu vaccines.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, health departments, pharmacies, health centers, and travel clinics, as well as by many employers and schools. So, next time you see a sign that says, "Get Your Flu Vaccine Here," stop in and get one, and encourage your friends and family to do the same.

For more information about the seriousness of the flu and the benefits of flu vaccination, talk to your doctor or other health care professional, or visit [healthymadisoncounty.org](http://healthymadisoncounty.org).