



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nov. 11, 2022

CONTACT:

nancy.nydam@dph.ga.gov

Flu Vaccination: The Best Protection Against the Flu *Don't Make Flu a Guest for the Holidays*

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is urging Georgians to get vaccinated against flu right now. Flu activity is already widespread in Georgia – earlier than we've seen in recent years. With Thanksgiving just two weeks away, you have time to protect yourself and your family and friends by not waiting another day to get vaccinated.

“The single most effective way to prevent the flu is the flu vaccine. Everyone over the age of six months should get a flu vaccine said Kathleen E. Toomey, commissioner, Georgia Department of Public Health. “The holidays bring gatherings with family and friends and increase the likelihood of spreading the flu. Now is the time to get vaccinated.”

It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu, so it's important to take preventive measures now.

New for this season, there are three flu vaccines recommended for individuals 65 years and older. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about which vaccine is best for you. However, if you can't get one of the quadrivalents, don't delay getting vaccinated. Any flu vaccine is preferably to no flu vaccine.

Flu vaccine is available at public health departments, doctors' offices, grocery stores, neighborhood clinics and pharmacies. To find a location near you, click on <https://www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines/>. Flu vaccine can be administered at the same time as COVID vaccine, so it's a good time to get your updated booster, too.

Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, chills and fatigue. One of the most pronounced flu symptoms is an overall feeling of achiness and malaise that comes on quickly.

In addition to the early arrival of flu, respiratory syncytial virus or RSV is also affecting a high number of Georgians, especially young children and older adults. RSV is a common respiratory virus that causes cold-like symptoms but can lead to lung inflammation and to pneumonia. It is especially serious in infants because of the small airways in their lungs. Call your healthcare professional if you or your child is having difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing worsening symptoms. There is no vaccine for RSV.

There are, however, tried and true measures to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses like flu and RSV:

- Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and warm water. Alcohol based gels are the next best thing if you don't have access to soap and water.
- Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow or arm to help prevent spread of the flu.
- Avoid touching your face as flu germs can get into the body through mucus membranes of the nose, mouth and eyes.

It is critically important to stay home from school or work if you are sick to keep from spreading infections to others. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease, pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years, but especially those younger than 2 years old. You should be free of a fever, without the use of a fever reducer, for at least 24 hours before returning to school or work.

For information about flu and how to prevent it, log on to dph.ga.gov/flu. You can learn more about RSV at <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>.

Georgia weekly influenza reports can be found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/flu-activity-georgia>. The reports are updated on Friday.