

Public Health Madison and Dane County: Get your flu vaccine before Halloween

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As you're planning outings to pick apples and visit corn mazes, add getting a flu vaccine to your to-do list. Public Health Madison & Dane County recommends that everyone 6 months and older get the flu vaccine now to protect throughout the flu season, which can begin as early as October and last through spring.

"There's no way to predict how severe a flu season will be, when it will start, end, or even when it will peak," says Tess Ellens, Immunization Coordinator for Public Health. "It takes about 2 weeks to get full protection after the vaccine is given. That's why we want you to get your flu vaccine before Halloween, and we start to see flu creep into our area," continues Ellens.

For those who have health insurance, flu vaccine is available at local clinics and pharmacies. For those who don't have health insurance, Public Health can help. Free flu shots are available by appointment for uninsured adults and children, and for children who have Medical Assistance/BadgerCare. To schedule an appointment, call (608) 266-4821.

The flu can cause high fever, cough, sore throat, body aches and oftentimes many days of missed work or school. It can be very serious, leading to hospitalization and even death. Certain people are at [higher risk of complications](#) if they get the flu, and vaccination is especially important for them: young children, adults 65 and older, adults living with chronic health conditions, people who are pregnant, people living with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, people living with cancer, and

people from racial and ethnic minority groups.

“It’s likely that flu will be circulating in our community this fall and winter, right alongside COVID-19, and it’s possible you could get sick with both viruses at the same time,” says Ellens. “The best way to prevent both is to be vaccinated against both viruses.”

Flu vaccines are safe and effective. While no vaccine is 100% effective, the flu vaccine can reduce the severity of illness and chances of hospitalization for those who get vaccinated.

“You can get your flu shot at the same time that you get your COVID-19 vaccine or other vaccines you need, helping you cut down on visits,” says Ellens. “And if you’ve recently had some vaccines, even if it’s been less than 14 days, you don’t have to wait to get your flu or your COVID-19 vaccine,” continues Ellens.

For more information about the flu, see <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

For more information about flu vaccines from Public Health Madison & Dane County, see <http://www.publichealthmdc.com/disease/immunizations/influenza.cfm>