

The DPH Bulletin – Special flu edition

From the Delaware Division of Public Health

September 2023

2023-24 flu vaccine is now available

The Division of Public Health (DPH) recommends that Delawareans 6 months of age and older get the 2023-24 flu vaccine, ideally by the end of October.

Getting the annual flu vaccine protects you and those at risk of flu complications from getting sick. Vaccination can prevent hospitalization and death. Preliminary estimates show that last season, people who were vaccinated against flu were about 40% to 70% less likely to be hospitalized due to flu illness or related complications. Hospital beds can be for those needing them most.

Flu viruses are constantly changing. The composition of U.S. flu vaccines is reviewed annually by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. Vaccine composition is updated as needed to best match the flu viruses that research indicates will be most common. U.S. flu vaccines will contain an updated influenza A strain for the 2023-24 influenza season, which begins October 2.

Those at higher risk of becoming ill from the flu should closely manage their health. [Individuals at higher risk](#) are children younger than 5 years old (especially children younger than 2 years), adults 65 years and older, pregnant people, and those with chronic underlying medical conditions. Chronic conditions include asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and other lung diseases, heart disease, diabetes, neurologic conditions, blood disorders, obesity, and weakened immune systems. Those with a known severe allergic reaction to eggs should consult with a health care provider prior to receiving the influenza vaccine to determine the appropriate influenza vaccine for them.

DPH strongly urges flu vaccinations for those who live or work with infants under 6 months of age and those who live or work in settings with many people, such as multi-family households, apartments, schools, offices, and correctional facilities. Vaccination is important for [health care workers](#), especially those who work in long-term care facilities or who live with or care for people at highest risk.

For more information about flu, visit flu.delaware.gov and cdc.gov/flu, or call 1-800-282-8672. [Click here](#) for the difference between cold and flu.

Tips to prevent flu

- Get your flu vaccine every year.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough or sneeze into your inner elbow.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Practice good health habits:
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
 - Get plenty of sleep!
 - Exercise.
 - Manage stress.
 - Drink plenty of fluids.
 - Eat nutritious food.
- If sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without using fever-reducing medicine. A fever is a measured temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater. If symptoms worsen, call your doctor.



Seniors 65+ need higher-dose flu vaccine

For adults 65 years and older, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention preferentially recommends one of three higher dose or adjuvanted flu vaccines: [Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent](#), [Flublok Quadrivalent](#), and [Fluad Quadrivalent](#) vaccines. If these are not available, people age 65 and older should get a standard-dose unadjuvanted inactivated flu vaccine instead. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm>.



Many locations have flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is free to most Delawareans, including those without insurance. Individuals without insurance may receive vaccines for flu at Public Health clinics and community vaccination events. Visit flu.delaware.gov or call 1-800-282-8672 for more information and vaccine locations.



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Division of Public Health