

Time to get a flu shot, CDC says

September 30 2013, by Karen Kaplan

More than half of the children in the United States were vaccinated against influenza during the 2012-13 flu season, along with more than 4 in 10 adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overall, 45 percent of Americans over the age of 6 months got some sort of flu vaccine.

"Last season, more people were vaccinated against influenza in the United States than in previous seasons," Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the CDC, told a gathering sponsored by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

But Americans can do better, she said, and vaccine makers are offering more options for the coming year than ever before.

Schuchat reported that 57 percent of [children](#) got a flu shot or flu mist in 2012-13, with coverage ranging from a low of 44 percent to a high of 82 percent in individual states. Among adults, 42 percent got some type of vaccine, with state-specific coverage ranging from 31 percent to 53 percent. South Dakota had the highest rate of vaccination among adults, and Rhode Island led the way for children, Schuchat said.

Vaccination rates were up for all age groups last flu season, compared with the previous season. The biggest gains were seen in teenagers (they improved to 42.5 percent from 33.7 percent), followed by children 5 to 12 (they improved to 58.6 percent from 54.2 percent).

Among adults, 45 percent of Asian Americans, 45 percent of whites and 41 percent of Indian-Americans got vaccinated during the last flu season, compared with 36 percent of blacks and 34 percent of Latinos.

"We do continue to see unfortunate disparities in adult influenza vaccinations," Schuchat said. "In children, we don't see those patterns." In fact, the vaccination rates for Asian American children (66 percent), Latino children (61 percent), black children (57 percent) and multiracial children (59 percent) were all higher than for white children (54 percent).

If you're considering a flu shot this year, Schuchat has a message for you:

"Now's the time to get it," she said. "You need to get vaccinated before you're exposed to influenza for it to work. The first cough or fever is not the time to start thinking about it."

About 73 million doses of [influenza vaccine](#) have already been shipped by manufacturers, who expect to produce at least 135 million doses for the 2013-14 [flu season](#), she said. Among them are some new choices, including a flu mist that covers four strains of [influenza](#) virus instead of the usual three. There's also a [flu shot](#) that is injected only into the skin instead of all the way into a muscle; as a result, the needle is 90 percent smaller than the one used for regular shots.

Which option is best? Whichever one you get, Schuchat said. "The most important thing is to be vaccinated."

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