

Is the nasal spray flu vaccine a good option this flu season?

September 14 2020, by Catherine Marfin



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With flu season fast approaching, health experts have emphasized that this year, more than ever, it's important to get vaccinated for the flu.

There are many vaccine options to choose from this season. But with the threat of a second wave of COVID-19 occurring at the same time as [flu season](#), many wonder whether the [nasal spray vaccine](#)—which hasn't been recommended by public health officials in recent years—is a good option this year.

Here's what you need to know about the nasal spray vaccine.

Who should get the nasal spray vaccine?

The nasal spray vaccine is only recommended for people aged 2 to 49. There are some exceptions to who should get it, including [pregnant women](#), children aged 2 to 4 who have asthma, and those who are immunocompromised.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October, to give your body time to build immunity before influenza begins widely spreading in the community.

Is the nasal spray vaccine as effective as the shot?

Flu vaccines vary in effectiveness every year. The CDC determines which flu strains go into the vaccine based on the types that circulated in winter seasons in other parts of the world.

Each year, the vaccine is anywhere from 40% to 60% effective, [health experts](#) say.

The nasal spray flu vaccine was found to be an effective vaccination option before 2009, when the H1N1, or [swine flu](#), outbreak occurred.

After the outbreak, studies showed that the nasal spray vaccine was not

as effective against H1N1. The CDC stopped recommending it from 2016 to 2018.

But it has since resumed recommending the nasal spray vaccine because of new ingredients used by the manufacturer.

There have been no effectiveness studies on the nasal spray vaccine since then, but data from other countries indicates it's as effective as the shot, the CDC says.

"I wouldn't necessarily recommend it or over the shot, or the shot over it," said Dr. Joseph Chang, chief medical officer of Parkland Health and Hospital System. "Things that are cleared by the CDC have a very rigorous process they have to go through. If the CDC and FDA has cleared them, then I would say either are good to use."

Dr. Dawn Johnson, pediatrician at Children's Health and medical director of the Children's Health Pediatric Group, said the nasal spray vaccine is often sought after by parents.

She said it's an acceptable option for this year's flu vaccination, but that it's sometimes hard to track down for patients.

"Generally speaking, there's not enough of it to give to everyone who prefers it," she said. "I would encourage parents to get the flu [vaccine](#) that is available and to definitely not postpone it while waiting for a [nasal spray](#)."

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Citation: Is the nasal spray flu vaccine a good option this flu season? (2020, September 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-nasal-flu-vaccine-good-option.html>

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