

# Flu shots and COVID-19

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends everyone over 6 months get a flu shot every season with rare exceptions.

Dr. Priya Sampathkumar, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases specialist, says getting vaccinated for the flu is safe. Billions of doses have been

given for more than 80 years to prevent flu, reduce symptoms and protect people who are at higher risk of complications.

"In most places, flu starts circulating by November, December. So it's recommended that everyone complete their flu [vaccine](#) by October. And now is the right time to start getting the flu vaccine," she says.

The number of flu cases this past year was low, and health experts like Dr. Sampathkumar attribute that to the COVID-19 pandemic and [preventive measures](#) that were put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Some [health experts](#) anticipate those flu numbers will rise this season, especially if people don't get their [flu shot](#).

"Last flu season was incredible. We had almost no cases of flu because we were in the midst of the COVID pandemic. Everyone was paying attention to masking and social distancing. People weren't getting together in large groups. So all the things that prevent COVID also prevent flu, and there were very, very few flu cases," she says. "This year, we're afraid that with—in a lot of places—masking recommendations being relaxed, that flu will spread more easily. And the fact that no one had flu last year means there are a lot more people who are vulnerable this year. So again, another very good reason to get the flu vaccine."

She says if you haven't been vaccinated for COVID-19 yet or need a third dose, you can get your flu shot and get vaccinated for COVID-19 at the same time.

"It's perfectly safe to get both at the same time, which will save a lot of people time from going in and making appointments for two different things. So I encourage you, especially those of you who need a third dose of the COVID vaccine—if you're immunosuppressed when you're going in to get that—you should get your flu vaccine at the same [time](#)," says

Dr. Sampathkumar.

She also emphasizes that the flu shot doesn't protect people against getting infected with COVID-19 and getting vaccinated for COVID-19 doesn't protect people against getting the flu.

"If you get flu, you're weakened by the flu, and you're more likely then to have bad consequences if you get COVID. So it's a good idea to get the flu vaccine for that reason. But the [flu vaccine](#) itself does not provide you with any kind of cross-protection from COVID."

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