

Despite risks, 60% of Americans say they may delay or skip the flu shot this year

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Three in five Americans say they may delay or skip the flu shot this year, despite warnings from health experts the influenza season could start early and be severe, according to a new survey released by the

American Heart Association, a global force for longer, healthier lives for all.

However, according to the same [online survey](#) of 1,000 U.S. adults by Wakefield Research for the American Heart Association, almost all (98%) of those who got the flu shot for the 2020–21 flu season said they plan to get vaccinated again this year.

"If there has ever been a year to prioritize getting your flu shot at the beginning of the season, this is it," said Donald Lloyd-Jones, M.D., Sc.M., FAHA, volunteer president of the American Heart Association. "The flu will be back this year, and getting the flu vaccine as soon as possible will offer the most protection for you and your loved ones."

While 82% surveyed said they are thinking more about their health due to COVID-19, only 26% said COVID-19 is making them more likely to get the jab this year. Hispanic respondents were more likely to say COVID-19 had an impact on their flu shot decision (57%) compared to non-Hispanic respondents (38%).

With COVID-19 still stressing many [community hospitals](#), Lloyd-Jones, an epidemiologist and chair of the department of preventive medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, emphasized that getting the flu vaccination will help prevent a "twin-demic" in addition to reducing the chances of patients facing a "one-two punch" of severe flu and severe COVID-19 together or back-to-back.

Even without COVID-19 on the scene, influenza and its counterpart pneumonia regularly rank among the top 10 causes of death in the U.S. and can be especially risky for certain populations. During the 2018-19 [flu season](#), more than 9 in 10 (93%) of adults hospitalized with influenza reported at least one underlying medical condition like cardiovascular disease, diabetes or obesity. Heart disease is one of the most common

chronic (long-term) conditions among adults hospitalized with the flu—accounting for about half of all flu hospitalizations.

"We recommend the flu shot for essentially everyone and particularly people who might be vulnerable because they have chronic health conditions—things like diabetes, [high blood pressure](#) or obesity—as well as people who are likely to be extra exposed like [health care workers](#), and people who are working in an essential front-line job where they come into contact with a lot of different people," Lloyd-Jones said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends getting vaccinated against the flu by Halloween, Oct. 31, for the best seasonal protection and recommends the influenza vaccine for everyone six months of age and older, with few exceptions.

The American Heart Association's new survey also identified a significant knowledge gap when it comes to the flu shot, with an overwhelming majority (94%) of Americans incorrectly answering at least one of eight questions about it. Younger generations were less informed than their older counterparts, with 83% of Gen Zers (18–24) getting at least two of these questions incorrect, compared to 67% of both Millennials (25–40) and Gen Xers (41–56), and 58% of Baby Boomers (57–75). Among all respondents, 73% know you can't get the flu from the flu shot and 88% know you can get a COVID-19 vaccine and the flu shot at the same time.

Lloyd-Jones emphasized that flu vaccination is for you, even if you don't consider yourself at high risk for serious complications.

"The flu virus is going to have an easier time spreading this year with more people out and about at school, church, sporting events and so on. It's incredibly important for you to get the [flu vaccine](#) this year and make sure you and your loved ones are protected," he said.

The [flu shot](#) is easy to get at places like a doctor's office, neighborhood pharmacy or community clinic, like a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). The COVID-19 vaccine is also available at these places, and you can get them at the same time, according to the CDC.

Provided by American Heart Association

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