

Seniors urged to get flu shots as U.S. cases rise

December 6 2022, by Cara Murez HealthDay Reporter



Experts are asking seniors to get their flu shots ASAP as an

exceptionally nasty flu season unfolds across the United States.

Already, 8.7 million [flu cases](#) have been reported, with 78,000 hospitalizations and 4,500 deaths, [according](#) to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the last week alone, the number of flu hospitalizations doubled.

Folks who are 65 and older are more at risk of complications from the flu, and they should have high-dose vaccines, recommended geriatric specialists at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

"It is important to take action now to prevent the possibility of severe infections, especially for populations at higher risk for complications, which includes [older adults](#)," said geriatrician [Dr. Deborah Freeland](#), an assistant professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern.

"Because the influenza virus changes over time, we need annual vaccinations to help protect against infection and reduce the severity of infection," she said in a center news release.

High-dose vaccines reduced the risk of [infection](#) by 24% in older adults compared with the standard dose, according to past research. Getting vaccinated also lowers the risk of heart attacks and death.

The immune system changes with age, making older adults more susceptible to infections. About 70% to 85% of seasonal flu-related deaths in the United States are in older adults, who also comprise about 50% to 70% of hospitalizations from flu, according to the CDC.

Even older adults who spend most of their time at home are at risk because they can catch the flu from [family members](#) or home health aides.

In Texas, the Department of State Health Services has seen a higher number of influenza-like illnesses statewide so far this season compared with recent years.

Vaccines cannot cause influenza infections, Freeland noted. They may cause side effects, which include soreness at the injection site, headache, fever, nausea and muscle aches. Those typically resolve within 24 to 48 hours.

"There is robust data behind the benefits of influenza vaccination," Freeland said. "Get your flu vaccination today to protect yourself and those around you."

People can further protect themselves this season by wearing masks in crowded places and washing hands regularly.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about the [flu](#).

Copyright © 2022 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Seniors urged to get flu shots as U.S. cases rise (2022, December 6) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-seniors-urged-flu-shots-cases.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--