

# Is it OK to get the flu, COVID and RSV shots at the same time? A doctor explains

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We've just entered flu season, which typically runs from September to March, and doctors recommend getting vaccinated within this time frame to protect against severe cases of the illness.

The same goes for protecting against COVID and RSV, which can be deadly diseases for many who don't get vaccinated.

If you need all three shots, can you get them at the same time in a one-and-done medical visit? The News & Observer talked with Dr. David Wohl, infectious disease expert with UNC Health, for answers.

## **Can you get your COVID, flu and RSV shot at the same time?**

Yes. It's perfectly safe to get all three shots at the same time, Wohl said.

Most people only need to know if you can get a COVID and flu shot at the same time, and the answer is also yes. (Only a small portion of the population should be vaccinated against RSV. See below for more information.)

A common strategy is to get one [vaccine](#) per arm. If you were to have a localized reaction, you can identify which shot was the cause, UNC Health physician Dr. Anita Skariah previously told The N&O.

"You might be a person that says, you know what, I'm just going to get all the shots I need and take some Tylenol that night, knowing I'm going to feel pretty crummy, but I don't have to go back and do it all over again," Wohl said.

## **Who should get an RSV shot?**

Only a small portion of the population should get an RSV vaccine. This means most people won't have a three-in-one appointment, but instead get only their COVID and flu shots together.

- This small pool of people includes adults who are 60 and older who have compromised immune systems and/or [heart problems](#) who would be deeply impacted by a flu-like virus, UNC's Wohl said.
- Young children and pregnant people can also be candidates for RSV vaccines. Talk to your doctor to see if the RSV vaccine is right for you.

Note: RSV vaccines typically last two years, and they are not to be taken annually.

## Who should get a flu and COVID shot?

(Almost) everyone should get a flu and COVID vaccine.

- Infants aged 0 to 6 months should not receive either vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease and Prevention's official guidance. There is currently no FDA-authorized vaccine for either virus for infants this young.
- That means flu and COVID vaccines are strongly recommended for everyone six months and older, with very rare exceptions.
- You should get a COVID shot this fall, even if you've already had COVID, the CDC says. The same goes for the flu.

Wohl recognizes some people are skeptical about getting vaccines, but he pushes for everyone eligible to get them.

"The virus's side effects are much, much worse than anything that we're concerned about from the vaccines," he said.

## Which COVID shot should I get?

It's safe to get any of the three COVID vaccines, which are Moderna, Pfizer and Novavax. (The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is no longer available.)

The brand you've received in the past doesn't make too much of a difference for the vaccine you'll want to get this year.

"It doesn't matter which of the three vaccines you get, as long as you get one of them. We're really talking about Coke and Pepsi here," UNC's Wohl said.

All COVID vaccines protect against the latest strain of the virus, Wohl said, though a new vaccine is expected to become available in the next few weeks with the latest technology to protect against the latest strains. (See below for more information.)

## **Which flu shot should I get?**

Flu vaccines are widely available, and the vast majority of people can get the flu shot offered for free at their nearest pharmacy or at pop-up [flu shot](#) events.

Some medical offices also offer a flu [nasal spray](#) vaccine, available for people ages two through 49. This may be a more popular option for children or others who don't like needles.

The CDC says this option isn't for everyone—such as pregnant people or children with asthma—so talk to your doctor to see if this may be a good option for you or your child.

## **When should I get vaccinated this fall?**

Late September or early October. New COVID vaccines will be available this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Tuesday.

If you don't have a big event coming up in which you'd need to get immediately vaccinated, you should schedule an appointment within the next few weeks to get the most updated COVID vaccine, UNC's Wohl said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises the public to receive their vaccinations—COVID and flu shots (and RSV, if necessary)—by the end of October.

But if you miss that window, you can get your vaccines anytime in the fall and winter. It would be too late come springtime, when cold-weather surges will likely have already passed.

## **Can you get free vaccines at pharmacies?**

Yes, many pharmacies offer free flu shots.

A number of national pharmacies—such as CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid and Walmart—offer them at no cost to the public. Many local neighborhood pharmacies offer free shots too.

Call your nearby location to learn how to make an appointment (or if they accept walk-in patients).

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