

Don't wait to get this year's flu vaccine

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Flu season is upon us again, and while case numbers in Texas remain [relatively low](#), a physician with Texas A&M University Health Services says the best time to [get vaccinated](#) is right now.

Dr. Tiffany Skaggs, senior director of primary care and specialty [medical care](#), says 2023 has been a "light" year for influenza so far,

though infection rates are still slightly higher than they were last year at this time. *Texas A&M Today* recently spoke with Skaggs about the outlook for the rest of [flu season](#) and the simple steps Texans can take to keep themselves and others safe.

Are there any major differences between this year's flu strains and previous strains?

There is not a major change expected in symptoms and hospitalization based on strain differences this year compared to last year. However, everyone 6 months and older (especially those at high risk such as pregnant, elderly or those with underlying [health conditions](#)) should get this year's flu vaccine. Last year's vaccine will not protect against this year's strains.

What should people know about this year's flu shot, and when is the best time to get it?

The best time to get it is now, before rates start to increase. We used to think that the vaccine "wore off" after a few months, but now we know that the more viral replications, the more "drift" from the strain that the vaccine was made for. In other words, early vaccination in the population is a good thing because it prevents infections, thus decreasing the viral replications as the virus circulates through a community.

How does the continued spread of COVID-19 impact the outlook for flu season?

Because COVID-19 and flu can both cause severe and life-threatening complications, the dual threat of these circulating at the same time has put the health care system on high alert. Health care facilities learned

during the height of COVID-19 how to prepare for surge capacity in order to care for potentially large numbers of very ill people.

Can you get a flu shot and a COVID shot at the same time?

You can and you should.

What other precautions can people take to stay safe from both COVID and flu during the next few months?

If you are sick, stay home. Consider wearing a face covering if you are ill and in public or you will be in [close proximity](#) with anyone with a respiratory illness. Wash your hands and use good respiratory safety and etiquette (sneeze and cough into your elbow, and wash your hands before and after a cough, sneeze, rubbing eyes or nose.)

The CDC has excellent [flu monitoring](#) that can help forecast your area's activity.

Provided by Texas A&M University

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