

Fewer Black kids getting flu shots, worrying CDC officials

December 10 2020, by Mike Stobbe



In this Thursday, Jan. 23, 2020, file photo, a patient receives an influenza vaccine in Mesquite, Texas. New government data suggests more Americans have been getting flu shots in 2020, apparently heeding the advice of health officials fearful of a flu/coronavirus double pandemic. (AP Photo/LM Otero, File)

More Americans have been getting flu shots this year, apparently heeding the advice of health officials fearful of a flu and coronavirus double pandemic, public health officials said Wednesday.

But the flu vaccination rate for Black children is down, fueling worries that Black Americans may be turning away from shots.

"It's certainly a point of concern," said Dr. Ram Koppaka of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which posted new flu vaccination data Wednesday. "We'll monitor this over the coming weeks very closely."

So far there's been little flu going around, CDC officials say.

But a push for vaccinations is considered especially important this year. The coronavirus is filling hospital beds in some parts of the country, and officials want to reduce any additional patient traffic that would further stress the health care system.

Flu [vaccine](#) manufacturers are producing a record 194 million to 198 million doses for the annual season, a big jump from the 175 million for last flu season.

A survey conducted in early November found that 49% of U.S. adults had been vaccinated, up from 44% who had gotten flu shots by the same point in 2019, the CDC said. But the same survey suggested more than a third of adults do not intend to get a [flu shot](#) this season.



In this Saturday, Oct. 17, 2020, file photo, University of Southern California student pharmacist candidate Whitney Fakolade prepares a single doze of influenza vaccine during L.A. Care Health Plan and Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan's Community Resource Center's Free Drive-Thru vaccination event at the Exposition Park in Los Angeles. New government data suggests more Americans have been getting flu shots in 2020, apparently heeding the advice of health officials fearful of a flu/coronavirus double pandemic. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)



In this Saturday, Oct. 10, 2020, file photo, 5-year-old Joseph Chavez, of Whittier, cries as he receives his flu shot from Michelle Hormozian, a pharmacist at the University of Southern California, as people receive free flu shots during a walk-up and drive-thru clinic by L.A. Care Health Plan and Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan's network of Community Resource Centers at Historic General Hospital in Los Angeles. New government data suggests more Americans have been getting flu shots in 2020, apparently heeding the advice of health officials fearful of a flu/coronavirus double pandemic. (Keith Birmingham/The Orange County Register via AP, File)

The CDC report came out the same day a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed that only about half of U.S. adults said they would get a coronavirus vaccine. It found that [white people](#) were twice as likely as Black people to say they would get vaccinated.

A different CDC survey found that 48% of U.S. kids were vaccinated against flu at the end of November—the same as last year. Vaccination rates in white and Hispanic children didn't change much. But they fell in Black children, to 33% from about 44% the previous November.

Koppaka, an associate director in the CDC's Immunization Services Division, said it's not clear why, but it underscores the need for health officials to work with communities of color and build more trust in vaccination campaigns.

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