

Reminder: Get Your Flu Shot

By the GWAAR Legal Services Team (for reprint)

Flu season starts each fall and lasts until the following spring. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months of age and older get a flu shot every season with few exceptions. Vaccination is especially important for people who are at high risk for complications from the flu. People aged 65 and older are at great risk of serious complications compared with younger adults.

Flu activity was unusually low during the 2020-2021 flu season. It is likely that COVID-19 prevention measures, like wearing face masks, staying home, hand washing, school closures, reduced travel, increased ventilation of indoor spaces, and physical distancing, prevented many cases of flu. In addition, flu vaccination may have played a role, as a record number of flu vaccine doses were distributed in the United States during 2020-2021.

Some experts are concerned that this year's flu season could be difficult. As with COVID-19, when someone recovers from the flu, they have antibodies that protect them from future flu infections for a short period of time. Because flu activity was so low last year, few people were infected and developed antibodies. It is possible that the recent surge in COVID-19 cases caused by the Delta variant may encourage people to stay home, minimize their contacts, and wear face masks. However, many other respiratory viruses have returned to pre-pandemic levels, and the CDC is expecting the flu viruses to do the same.

It's important to get vaccinated before flu activity begins in your community. In general, it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in your body and provide protection against the flu. If possible, you should get a flu shot before the end of October. However, getting vaccinated later can still help later in the season while flu viruses are circulating.

Most insurance, including Medicaid, covers an annual flu shot without charging a copay or coinsurance. Check with your plan to find out whether you must go to a specific provider to receive the shot. Original Medicare Part B covers 100% of the Medicare-approved price when you receive your flu shot from a provider that accepts Medicare. Additionally, Medicare Advantage Plans are required to cover flu shots without deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance, as long as you get the flu shot from an Advantage Plan provider.