



2022-23 Flu Season Employer Toolkit

Encouraging Flu Shots During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Updated January 3, 2023

This year's flu season is the worst we've seen in a decade. The best defense—just as it is with COVID-19—is vaccination, which public health experts urge for almost all people 6 months and older, starting now. This Toolkit will help your business take action to protect the health of your workers and customers.

Employer Actions for Flu Season

You can make it easier for employees to get their annual flu shot by taking one or more of the following actions:

- **Offer paid sick leave.** More than 30 million U.S. workers lack access to paid sick leave. Low-income employees are significantly less likely than high-income workers to receive sick pay. This has important implications for public health, as well as workplace productivity. When people don't have access to paid sick leave, they're more likely to go to work when they're under the weather, putting their co-workers and your customers at risk of getting sick, too.
- **Host a flu shot clinic.** Numerous pharmacies and other providers can assist in bringing this service to your workplace. Consider making it available to workers' families, too—vaccinating children against the flu will make their families healthier and reduce absenteeism from parents caring for their sick children at home.
- **Offer flexible time off for employees to get flu shots if you can't host a clinic on-site.** What helps people get vaccinated is making a plan. And time off helps that plan come together.
- **Make use of effective messaging.** Your company leaders are trusted messengers on health topics, so encourage them to share their stories about why they get their flu shots. This may include the shots' routine nature ("I get it every year") or an emotional appeal ("I want to know I can enjoy a healthy holiday with my family"). If your company has seen high uptake at previous on-site flu shot clinics, share that with employees ("Last year, more than half our team got their free flu shots on site.") Keep in mind that research shows they may be more receptive to hearing about "flu shots" than the "flu vaccine."

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- **Encourage employees to get their COVID-19 booster with their flu shot.** Framing COVID-19 boosters as routine as flu shots (which roughly half of all adults get each year) could increase their uptake this year and going forward. Emphasize the convenience of getting both shots at the same time.
 - **Confirm and enhance health insurance coverage for flu shots.** If your health insurance provider covers flu shots, communicate that to your employees. And if it doesn't, consider expanding that coverage for 2023.
 - **Educate your employees and spread the word on social media.** Answers to common questions, print-ready materials and social media graphics and messaging can be found below.
 - **Work with Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to communicate with workers from historically excluded communities.** Collaborate on tailored messaging and ways to make sure you're reaching hourly, part-time and front-line workers. And consult your ERGs on approaches to overcoming barriers to flu shot trust or access. Use our [Tips for Engaging Employee Resource Groups and Informal Employee Networks](#) and [Audience Insights & Messaging Guidance for Black, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska Native Communities](#) to apply effective principles of tailored outreach to your flu shot campaign.
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Flu and Health Equity

Keep in mind as you encourage employees and their families to get their flu shots, there are significant racial and ethnic disparities when it comes to serious illnesses from the flu. According to a new [study](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Black adults are 80% more likely than white adults to be hospitalized for the flu.
- American Indian or Alaska Native adults are 30% more likely than white adults to be hospitalized for the flu.
- Hispanic adults are 20% more likely than white adults to be hospitalized for flu.

Rates of flu shot uptake help explain the difference. In the 2021-2022 flu season:

- 53.9% of white adults got a flu shot
- 42.0% of Black adults got a flu shot
- 40.9% of American Indian or Alaska Native adults got a flu shot
- 37.9% of Hispanic adults got a flu shot

Trust is key. The study's authors say that the same efforts that improved COVID-19 vaccine uptake among these communities could help close the gap in flu shots, primarily making vaccines available in familiar places (including local businesses, stores and restaurants).

Tailored messaging pays off, too. The [GetMyFluShot campaign](#) from the Ad Council, the American Medical Association and CDC helped reduce concerns about flu shot risks and side effects among Black adults (from 43% to 33%) and Hispanic adults (from 41% to 32%).

Questions & Answers about Flu and COVID-19

Is the flu shot effective? Yes, typically, the flu shot reduces the risk of getting sick with the flu by 40-60%, and the CDC says this year's version is a very good match to the virus. It's even more effective in preventing serious flu-related complications like hospitalization and death, most of which occur in people who are not vaccinated.

When should I get my flu shot? Right away. It takes about 2 weeks after getting your flu shot to develop full protection.

Are the side effects worse this year? The side effects remain constant from year to year. The most common side effects from flu shots are soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given. Some people also report having a low fever, headache, and muscle aches after getting their flu shot.

What's the difference between the flu and COVID-19? Flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. The CDC has more information on how the symptoms and contagiousness compare

Can I have flu and COVID-19 at the same time? Yes. Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, you may need a test to tell you if you are sick with one or the other, or both.

Will a flu shot protect me against COVID-19? No, the flu shot will not protect against COVID-19.

Will the flu shot increase my risk of getting COVID-19? No, there is no evidence for this.

Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine and a flu shot at the same time? Yes. You can get them together.

Additional Resources

Information for the 2022-2023 Flu Season

- [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [GetMyFluShot.org](https://www.getmyflushot.org)
- [VacunateContraLaInfluenza.org](https://www.vacunatecontraelainfluenza.org) (Spanish)
- [Vaccinate Your Family](https://www.vaccinateyourfamily.org) (FAQ)

Social Media Tools

- [Ad Council - GetMyFluShot.org](https://www.adcouncil.org)
- [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [Vaccinate Your Family](https://www.vaccinateyourfamily.org)

Print Handouts

- [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

Videos

- ["No Time for Flu" - Ad Council](https://www.adcouncil.org)

- [“Marcelina’s Story” - Vaccinate Your Family](#)