

Massachusetts officials remind residents about importance of flu and COVID-19 vaccinations

“With flu season underway, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is reminding residents of all ages to get vaccinated. Flu activity across the country is higher than usual so far this year. Residents can get both a flu shot and a COVID-19 booster in the same visit.

“This flu season, residents can protect themselves and their families by getting a flu vaccine even if they haven’t gotten a vaccine in years past,” said Public Health Commissioner Margret Cooke. “It’s easy to get your flu shot along with your COVID-19 booster if you’re eligible for one, and both vaccines are widely available.”

The flu can lead to serious illness, hospitalization, or death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there have already been 13 million cases, 120,000 hospitalizations, and 7,300 deaths due to flu this season. The most common symptoms of flu are fever, cough, and sore throat. Symptoms can also include body aches, headaches, chills, runny nose, and fatigue.

Flu vaccination is especially important for people who are at higher risk of severe disease which could result in hospitalization or death. People at higher risk include those who are over age 65 or under 2 years, and anyone with a chronic respiratory condition, heart disease, a weakened immune system, or who is pregnant. Antiviral medications, such as Tamiflu, are available with a prescription to help reduce disease severity.

“Everyone over the age of 6 months is eligible for both the flu and COVID vaccines and can receive both vaccines at the same time. Spending time around more people increases the chances you will be exposed to one or more viruses,” said Dr. Larry Madoff, Medical Director of DPH’s Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences. “The current flu vaccine is a good match to the circulating strains and gives you the antibodies you need to help fight off infection.”

COVID and flu vaccines are both widely available for everyone 6 months and older. Other actions that people can take to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses like the flu and COVID-19 include staying home when sick, keeping children home from daycare or school if sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and practicing good handwashing hygiene.

Find a flu and/or COVID-19 vaccine site near you. Information about influenza and COVID-19 is available by visiting mass.gov/influenza or mass.gov/covid19, calling your health care provider, local board of health, or DPH at (617) 983-6800.” -Mass.gov.