

Flu Vaccinations Available, Department of Health Says Get a Shot

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Flu vaccine is already available from many health care providers in our state, in plenty of time to be ready for flu season. "Now's the time to get a flu shot so you're protected all season long," said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes. "Vaccine is the best protection we have against the flu. Getting it now, before people around you start getting sick, will protect you through the flu season, which usually peaks in January but starts earlier." Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu shot. It's especially important for young kids, people 65 and older, pregnant women, parents of newborns, and people with medical conditions like asthma and other lung diseases, heart disease, diabetes, and neurologic conditions. Different types of flu vaccine are available. Besides the regular flu shot, there's a high-dose vaccine for people 65 and older, and a nasal spray vaccine for healthy people ages 2-49. There's also a vaccine that has a much smaller needle than regular flu shots. Ask your health care provider which is best for you and your family.

This season's flu vaccine protects against three different strains of flu virus. It doesn't protect against the newer H3N2 variant virus that is showing up in other parts of the country. Most cases of this new virus have been from direct contact with pigs at county fairs. There are no reported cases in our state. "Using good health manners like washing your hands, covering your cough, and staying home when you're sick can help keep away flu and other respiratory illnesses, like whooping cough," Dr. Hayes said. "Remember, we still have a whooping cough epidemic in our state." The Department of Health bought more than 721,000 doses of flu vaccine for kids. All recommended vaccines, including whooping cough, are provided at no cost for Washington children through age 18. The department also bought Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine for uninsured and underinsured adults, so cost isn't a barrier for them, either. Health care providers may charge an office visit fee and an administration fee to give the vaccine. People who can't afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived. Many health plans cover flu vaccines as preventive care. To find a health care provider or immunization clinic, contact [your local health agency](#) or the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. Information about [flu and flu vaccine](#) is available on our website. The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for a healthy dose of information. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).