



# Southeastern Idaho Public Health

For Immediate Release  
November 9, 2020

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## Protect Your Health This Flu Season

As if 2020 has not given us enough to worry about, flu season is upon us. You may be wondering what viruses the 2020-2021 flu vaccine will protect you from. Maybe you're curious about how to safely get a flu vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic. As with all preventative care, it's still important for you and your loved ones to receive this year's flu vaccine.

Each year, the flu vaccine is updated to match the circulating flu viruses. Typically flu vaccines protect against the three or four viruses that research suggests will be most common for that flu season. According to the CDC, the 2020-2021 flu vaccines will come in a trivalent and quadrivalent option. The trivalent protects against two strains of influenza A and one strain of influenza B. The quadrivalent protects against all three viruses that the trivalent protects against, plus an additional strain of B virus.

We recommend that individuals consult with their healthcare provider to find out what flu vaccine is best for them. There are high-dose vaccines that are recommended for those 65 years and older. There are also flu vaccines that are meant for only pediatric patients.

This fall and winter, we expect that both the flu virus and COVID-19 will be circulating, so it's important for everyone to take precautions to protect themselves and others. It is possible to have the flu and COVID-19, or other respiratory illnesses, at the same time. We expect those occurrences to be rare, but could still happen. Many symptoms of the flu are similar to COVID-19, so it may be hard to tell what you have become ill with. Seeking testing in these circumstances will help determine how you should move forward with self-isolating and managing your symptoms. The flu and COVID-19 are caused by different viruses, so testing will confirm the diagnosis.

The fatality rate for COVID-19 is higher than with seasonal flu. Some people who have had COVID-19 struggle with continued health issues. COVID-19 reinfection may also be possible. Today, in the United States, more than 235,000 people have died from COVID-19. That is more than the last five flu seasons combined.

When going out to receive your flu vaccine, follow precautions that you would take while going to a public place:

- Wear a cloth face covering

- Avoid close contact with those outside of your household
- Wash your hands often
- Stay home if you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes

It's important to know who should not receive a flu vaccine. Anyone younger than 6 months of age is not recommended to get a flu vaccine. Also, those who are currently ill with COVID-19 are not recommended to receive the flu vaccine. After they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation, they can receive a flu vaccine.

Having a prior infection of flu does not protect you from being infected again from either virus. For this reason, it is recommended that everyone get a flu shot every year.

A flu vaccine this season can also help our healthcare system by reducing the burden COVID-19 and the flu could have on our local hospitals. A flu vaccine is the best defense against the flu. Combined with the flu shot, everyone can take every day preventative actions, such as,

- Avoiding close contact with those who are sick
- Staying home if you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Wash your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with viruses

In Idaho, there were 40 influenza-related deaths in the 2019-2020 season. Of those, 9 occurred in our area.

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