

Ask the pediatrician: Which flu vaccine should children get this year?

November 22 2021, by Dr. Flor Munoz



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Q: Does it matter which flu vaccine my children get this year and when they get it?

A: Many people don't realize it, but flu can be a very serious illness. It causes thousands of deaths in the United States every year, even among previously healthy [children](#). With COVID-19 expected to still be spreading this fall and winter, it is even more important to protect your child from viruses like influenza.

As a parent, the best thing you can do to protect your children from the flu is to get them vaccinated right away. All children ages 6 months and older should get their [influenza vaccine](#) as soon as possible. Everyone around your children should be vaccinated, too.

For the 2021-22 [influenza season](#), two types of influenza vaccines are available. The first is what many people call the flu shot. The second comes as a nasal spray. All the vaccines available for children this year contain four influenza viruses (two A and two B viruses).

Both the AAP and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention want as many children as possible to get a [flu vaccine](#) every year. The AAP recommends that any licensed vaccine available this year and appropriate for a [child's age](#) and [health status](#) be given to children, with no preference. Both types of available flu vaccine (flu shot or nasal spray) can be given according to their indications, with no preference, this season.

If your child is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, it can be given at the same time as the flu vaccine, or at any time. Talk with your pediatrician about your child getting the flu vaccine along with other recommended immunizations.

Last flu season was unusual, with physical distancing, mask-wearing, hand hygiene and other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and possibly doing the same for the flu. However, flu and COVID-19 are predicted to spread this winter.

Children with COVID-19 can still get a flu vaccine after they have recovered from their COVID-19 illness. Keep in mind that symptoms such as a stuffy and runny nose can make it hard to give the [nasal spray](#) vaccine.

A child who had an allergic reaction after a flu vaccine in the past should be seen by an allergist. The allergist can help parents decide if their child should receive their annual flu vaccination. A child with a known history of egg allergy can receive the flu vaccine.

When possible, children should get the flu shot immediately. There's no need to wait, even if your child got the previous year's flu vaccine in March or April. Influenza season typically peaks in February, so it's not too late to get the shot. Children 6 months to 8 years of age should receive two doses if this is the first time they are being vaccinated against [influenza](#), or if they have only received one dose of flu vaccine ever before July 1.

It's a great idea to go to your pediatrician's office for the [vaccine](#). Your pediatrician knows your child best. The pediatrician's office has your child's health information, making it easy to keep track of the flu shot in the health record.

Now more than ever, it is important to stay connected to your pediatrician and your medical home. Many pediatricians also offer flu shot clinics, including curbside and drive-through clinics.

If your child needs to go somewhere else, such as a pharmacy or retail-based clinic, parents should share the document they receive with the pediatrician.

Remember, getting vaccinated is the best way to protect your children, yourself, and your parents and grandparents from the flu.

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