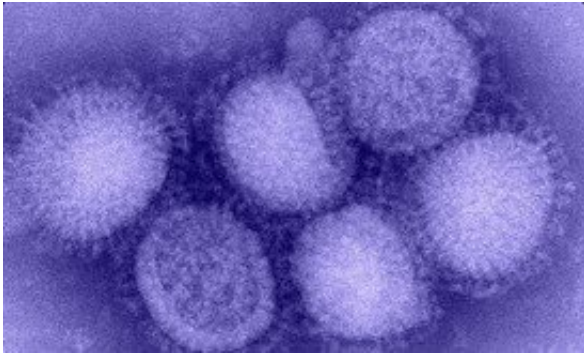


# Fighting influenza

November 18 2021, by Deb Balzer

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Influenza virus. Credit: CDC, 2020.

It's cold and flu season on top of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The concern this year is the early arrival of respiratory syncytial virus, along with an uncertain flu season after a mild one last year due to many people in isolation and wearing masks.

So how can you protect yourself and your family?

Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a pediatric infectious diseases physician at Mayo Clinic Children's Center has more.

The authorization of COVID-19 vaccinations for kids 5 and older is a sigh of relief for many families eager to protect their children against COVID-19.

"This also helps our kids and families get back to their usual activities,

hopefully with less disruption," says Dr. Rajapakse.

Getting vaccinated for COVID-19, however, doesn't protect against influenza, which can have severe complications for some.

"We know that [young children](#), the elderly, people with weakened immune systems, and people who are pregnant are at higher risk for having severe flu illness."

While healthy people usually recover within a week or two, those at high risk may develop bronchitis, ear infections and, most seriously, pneumonia.

"We definitely recommend everyone get their flu shot this year," says Dr. Rajapakse. "That's going to continue to be one of the most effective ways to prevent transmission and infection with flu."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Mayo Clinic recommend that everyone 6 months and older be vaccinated for flu.

Along with vaccination, Dr. Rajapakse says practicing good hand hygiene, wearing a mask in [public spaces](#) and avoiding those who are sick are ways to prevent transmission of flu, [respiratory syncytial virus](#) and other respiratory viruses.

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