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## **This year, the flu vaccine is more important than ever before**

### ***DHSS urges Missourians to get vaccinated***

JEFFERSON CITY, MO -- In a typical year, over [100,000 Missourians become sick](#) from the flu. Many Missourians of all ages become seriously ill and some are hospitalized. 2020 is anything but typical, and state health officials are urging Missourians to get the flu vaccine by the end of October.

"We always put individual patients first, and because of that, we are concerned that fewer than half of Missouri adults typically get a flu vaccine. This year, we want to do better. Do it for yourself, or do it to protect your loved ones," said Dr. Randall Williams, Director of the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). "As the Governor has said, we are not powerless against COVID-19. This also applies to the flu. One measure you can take to protect yourself during this time of COVID-19 is to get a flu vaccine."

Symptoms of flu and COVID-19 significantly overlap one another. Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea. It is unknown how a person could be affected by experiencing both viruses at the same time.



"To ensure our state has the capacity to care for COVID-19 patients, we need to do whatever we can to prevent strain on our health care system and keep Missourians healthy," said Williams. "Flu vaccines are therefore important to the COVID-19 fight. Preventing flu means fewer unnecessary medical visits and hospitalizations. Preventing flu also reduces disruptions to our daily lives – at home, at work, at school."

DHSS is working closely with local public health agencies to increase immunization rates among adult populations who are most at risk for contracting COVID-19. Ancillary supplies and vaccine transport coolers have also been purchased for local providers to host adult flu vaccine clinics or offer curbside or drive-through clinics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has provided Missouri with an additional 300,000 adult flu vaccines to meet what is expected to be an increased demand.

"While the effectiveness of the vaccine varies from year to year, studies have shown some protection is better than none at all," said Williams. "You are less likely to spread the virus to those around you if vaccinated, and it has also been shown to cause symptoms to be milder if you do become infected."

Groups of people at high risk for flu-related complications include children age 5 and under, adults older than 65, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems or chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease. Those who are in a high risk group and experience symptoms of the flu should contact their primary health care provider.

Flu vaccines are already becoming available, and it is recommended annually for everyone 6 months and older without an increased risk for a serious adverse reaction. Contact your health care provider, or find a location near you using [VaccineFinder](#).

DHSS will launch a multimedia public awareness campaign starting Oct. 1 that focuses on the people--friends, family, front-line workers--who are protected when one person gets vaccinated.

For more information, visit [health.mo.gov/flu](http://health.mo.gov/flu).

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*Attached Photo: Dr. Randall Williams, DHSS Director, received his flu vaccination this morning, September 25, at the Cole County Health Department.*

**About the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services:** The department seeks to be the leader in protecting health and keeping people safe. More information about DHSS can be found at <http://health.mo.gov> or find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) @HealthyLivingMo

