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PRESS RELEASE

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IL Department on Aging Encourages Older Adults to Get Their Flu Shots

Don't wait, as it could be too late

Springfield – The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) is encouraging all older Illinoisans that getting a flu vaccine during the 2020-2021 flu season is especially important in order to protect yourself and the people around you from the flu. Doing so will also help reduce the strain on healthcare systems, keeping hospital beds and other medical resources available for COVID-19 patients.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, the elderly and people with chronic health problems are much more likely to develop serious complications after influenza infection than are young, healthier people. This risk is due in part to changes in immune defenses with increasing age. While flu seasons vary in severity, during most seasons, people 65 years of age and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu disease. In recent years, for example, it's estimated that between 70% and 85% of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in individuals 65 years of age and older, and between 50% and 70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Flu vaccination is especially important for older Illinoisans, individuals with underlying medical conditions, and persons with disabilities because they have an increased risk of developing serious complications from the flu; coupled with being at higher risk for contracting COVID -19. Flu vaccines are updated each season as needed to keep up with changing viruses. Also, immunity wanes over a year so annual vaccination is needed to ensure the best possible protection against flu.

“According to the experts, getting a flu shot will increase your chances of staying healthy and staying out of the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. “This is another instance of being able to plan for what you can and focus on things you can control; take precautions now so you don't regret it later.”

The best way to protect against the flu and its potentially serious complications is with a flu vaccine. [Find flu vaccines in your area with Vaccine Finder](#). Most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid cover one flu shot per flu season. Beneficiaries pay nothing for a flu shot if their doctor or other qualified healthcare provider accepts Medicare payment for giving the shot. Always seek the advice of your healthcare provider before accepting medical treatment.

IDoA, its 13 Area Agencies on Aging, and 55 Care Coordination Units are working to ensure that services provided by the agency are never interrupted. If you or an older family member, friend, or neighbor need assistance, please visit www.illinois.gov/aging or contact the **Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (hearing impaired call 888-206-1327)** or by email aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov.

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)