



# News Release

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Contacts: [Kelly Stowe](#), Communications Office  
[Marqise Allen](#), Communications Office

360-236-4022

360-236-4076

## Flu can be serious and deadly; get vaccinated now before people are sick

**OLYMPIA** — Flu season is upon us and although state health officials don't know exactly when the flu will strike, how serious it will be or how long the season will last, they do know that it spreads every year and now is the time to get vaccinated against this serious, sometimes deadly virus.

“The first and most important thing you can do to protect yourself from flu is to get vaccinated every year,” says State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. “Flu vaccine is available now in most provider offices and pharmacies across the state and getting it now will provide protection throughout the season. It’s not too early.”

Along with getting the flu vaccine, frequent hand-washing is extremely important because the virus spreads easily when someone who’s infected coughs, sneezes, or talks. People with the flu can spread it to others before they know they’re sick. Symptoms may include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and fatigue.

Getting the flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months of age and older as soon as providers have it available. It’s especially important for [high-risk groups](#): young children, older people, pregnant women, and people with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, lung diseases, heart diseases, and neurologic conditions.

There are more vaccine options available this season than ever before, including the [standard flu shot](#) for people six months and older, [intradermal](#) (smaller needle) for adults 18 to 64 years of age, the [high-dose flu shot](#) for adults 65 and older, [nasal spray](#) for healthy people (except pregnant women) between the ages of two and 49, a [cell-based flu vaccine](#), and an [egg-free option](#) for people 18 through 49 years of age. All flu vaccines protect against three strains of flu virus and some protect against a fourth strain.

All flu vaccine offers protection and there's no preference for one vaccine over another, except for one. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommend the use of the nasal spray vaccine for healthy children two through eight years of age who do not have an underlying health condition. All nasal spray vaccine protects against four strains of flu.

Another reason to get your flu shot before people around you are sick is the vaccine takes about two weeks from the time of vaccination for a person to be protected from the flu. Children under nine years of age may need two doses about a month apart for the best protection.

Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids through age 18, and they're available from health care providers across the state. Although health care providers may charge an office-visit fee and an administration fee for the vaccine, a family that can't afford to pay can ask that the administration fee be waived.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, visit the online [flu vaccine finder](#), call your [local health agency](#), visit the [ParentHelp123 resource finder](#), or call the Family Health Hotline, 1-800-322-2588.

The [Department of Health website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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