



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Department of Health urges everyone to get a flu shot

HONOLULU – During the COVID-19 pandemic, taking steps to prevent influenza is more important than ever. Influenza (flu) is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. This year, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is urging all eligible individuals to get a flu shot by the end of October.

"Flu vaccines will not prevent COVID-19, but they will reduce the burden of flu illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths on the health care system," said Immunization Branch Chief Ron Balajadia. "Getting your flu shot also helps to conserve scarce medical resources for the care of people with COVID-19."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine for all individuals who are over 6 months of age. Vaccination of [high risk persons](#), including young children, pregnant women, persons 65 years of age and older, and people with certain chronic health conditions, is particularly important to decrease risk of severe flu illness.

From Oct. 1, 2019 to April 4, 2020, there were between 410,000 and 740,000 flu hospitalizations and between 24,000 and 62,000 flu deaths in the U.S. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea; similar to symptoms seen with COVID-19.

In addition to getting vaccinated, DOH encourages the public to continue frequent handwashing or use of an [alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#), physical distancing, covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing, and staying home from work, school and social gatherings when sick.

"We can prevent both influenza and COVID-19 together by continuing to follow safe practices to prevent the spread of germs," added Balajadia. "Remember to also avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands, and to frequently clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects like door knobs, light switches and cell phones."

**Do your part.** Flu vaccinations work to protect your health and the health of your family members and community as well. Getting vaccinated provides protection to those around you who may be at high risk of severe illness, including those who may be too young to be vaccinated and those with medical conditions who cannot be immunized.

If you think you have the flu, contact your healthcare provider right away. Treatment with prescription antiviral drugs work best when begun within 48 hours of getting sick, however they can still be beneficial if given later during illness.

For more information about the flu, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/flu/>.

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