



COLORADO

Department of Public Health & Environment

What's New With Flu 2022-23

Will the upcoming 2022-23 flu season be different from past seasons? Following two years with unusually low flu activity, the upcoming 2022-23 flu season is full of uncertainty. [COVID-19 mitigation factors](#) likely contributed to [historically-low flu activity during the 2020-21 season](#), and the relatively low severity and late onset of flu activity during the 2021-22 season. However, now that many pre-pandemic behaviors have resumed, the timing, severity, and unique characteristics of the upcoming flu season are at the forefront of public health officials' minds, and remain difficult to predict. We learn from past flu seasons and use the information to predict patterns, but no two flu seasons are the same. It is important to enter this fall and winter expecting and preparing for a more typical, pre-pandemic flu season.

Many providers, including retail pharmacies, may have already received privately purchased flu vaccines for the 2022-23 season, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will distribute publicly-funded (VFC and 317) flu vaccines as soon as they are available. The best time to administer flu vaccine is before the end of October. However, providers should offer flu vaccine throughout the season for as long as flu virus is circulating and unexpired flu vaccine is available.

Getting a seasonal flu vaccine each year is the best protection against seasonal influenza and its potentially severe outcomes, including hospitalization and death. The core recommendation for flu vaccination remains unchanged for the 2022-23 flu season. **Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all people aged 6 months and older who do not have a contraindication.**

[What's new for 2022-23](#)

There are three primary updates for the 2022-23 influenza season – the vaccine composition, available flu products, and a preferential recommendation.

1) Vaccine composition

All available flu vaccines will be quadrivalent formulations. They will contain active ingredients derived from two influenza A viral strains and two influenza B viral strains. The 2022-23 vaccine composition reflects updates in two of the four components compared to the 2021-22 vaccine composition. The new composition includes an update to the A(H3N2) strain and an update with the B-Victoria component. The A(H1N1) component and the B-Yamagata component are unchanged.

Did you know: There are more than 100 subtypes of the influenza virus? The subtypes that circulate each year can change or mutate just enough that our body may not be as good at recognizing the subtype with the new variance. That's why a new vaccine is necessary every year.

2) Available flu products

There are [nine licensed and available influenza vaccine products](#) in the United States. All are made with various vaccine technologies and include multiple presentations. Flu vaccines can be referred to as inactivated influenza vaccines (IIVs), recombinant influenza vaccines (RIVs), or live attenuated influenza vaccines (LAIV). IIVs include cell-cultured, adjuvanted, and high-dose vaccines.

3) Preferential recommendation

Adults aged 65 years and older should get one of three specific vaccine products: high-dose inactivated influenza vaccine, recombinant influenza vaccine, or adjuvanted inactivated influenza vaccine. If one of these three products is not available, people aged 65 years and older can get any other age-appropriate influenza vaccine.

Flu vaccine is a powerful tool to prevent illness, medical visits, hospitalization, and death. While COVID-19 continues to circulate, it is more important than ever to protect our communities and loved ones by getting a seasonal flu vaccine. Flu vaccine can safely be co-administered with other vaccines, including COVID-19. Each year, CDC estimates the number of people who receive a flu vaccine is about 50% of the eligible population. Although Colorado performs higher than the national average, there is still room for improvement. There are several [strategies to improve Colorado vaccination rates](#), such as reducing out-of-pocket costs for vaccines, expanding access by offering special flu-only clinic hours, and providing a [strong recommendation](#) for flu vaccine with every client interaction.

To learn more about flu in Colorado, visit cdphe.colorado.gov/influenza.