

# BLUE FISH PEDIATRICS

www.bluefishmd.com

## THE WOODLANDS EDITION

Biannual Newsletter

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## What You Need to Know About the Flu

The flu is an illness caused by a virus. Like a cold, it attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu can sometimes lead to other problems like pneumonia, ear/sinus problems, dehydration, and worsening of asthma. For most of us, the flu will go away in 1-2 weeks.

### How can I catch the flu?

- The flu is easily passed from person to person via direct contact or via airborne pathogens (coughing and sneezing).
- A person can also get the flu by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching his mouth or nose.

## Who is most at risk for getting the flu?

Everyone is at risk for getting the flu, but for some people the flu can cause serious illness. Those most at risk include:

- All children aged 6 months to 5 years
- All persons aged older than or equal to 50 years
- Children and adolescents (aged 6 months to 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- Adults and children who have lung (including asthma), heart (except high blood pressure), kidney, liver, brain/nerve, blood, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)
- Adults and children who have a weak immune system either due to illness or medication
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term-care facilities.
- Health care personnel
- People exposed to at-risk people



## What are the symptoms of the flu?

The most common signs of the flu include:

- Fever
- Headache and muscle ache
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Vomiting or diarrhea (more common in children)

## Who should receive the flu vaccine?

It is best for everyone, including breastfeeding mothers, to receive the flu vaccine (save those who have contraindications to receiving it, as listed below). In the event of a known flu vaccine shortage, we may be mandated by the CDC to follow a prioritization plan.

### Those who should not receive the injectable flu vaccine:

- Children less than 6 months of age
- Anyone with moderate to severe febrile illness
- All children with egg allergy of any severity can receive influenza vaccine without any additional precautions beyond those recommended for any vaccine
- Anyone with an active neurological disorder
- Anyone with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome
- Please let us know if you have a bleeding disorder or are receiving anticoagulant therapy

### Those who should not receive the intranasal flu vaccine:

- Anyone with a history of a severe allergic reaction, including anaphylaxis, to any components of the flu vaccine or eggs
- Anyone aged < 2 years or those aged  $\geq 50$  years
- Adults and children who have lung (including asthma), heart (except high blood pressure), kidney, liver, brain/nerve, blood, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)
- Adults and children who have a weak immune system either due to illness or medication (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV)
- Children aged 2 - 4 years whose parents or caregivers report that a health-care provider has told them during the preceding 12 months that their child had wheezing or asthma, or has taken the following medication (i.e. Albuterol, Xoponex, Advair, Flovent, Symbicort, Pulmicort)
- Children and adolescents (aged 6 months--18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Pregnant women
- Anyone with a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome
- Anyone who is or is living with someone who has a weak immune system either due to illness or medication

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*“Influenza (flu) usually comes on suddenly. In many cases you can pinpoint the hour when symptoms start.”*

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See page 4 for children under 9 years of age to see how many doses are needed this season.

## Intranasal flu vaccine is not available this year

Although the intranasal flu vaccine is an acceptable alternative to the flu shot for the 2020-2021 flu season, Blue Fish has decided not to use the intranasal flu to reduce the risk of COVID-19 (due to aerosolized particles).

## What's available?

Flu viruses are always changing. Each year, experts study thousands of flu virus samples from around the world to figure out which viruses are making people sick and how these viruses are changing. With this information, they forecast which viruses are most likely to make the most people sick during the next flu season. These strains are then used to make the flu vaccine for the next flu season.

It is recommended that quadrivalent vaccines for use in the 2020-2021 influenza season (northern hemisphere winter) contain the following:

- A/Guangdong-Maonan/SWL1536/2019 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus (updated)
- A/Hong Kong/2671/2019 (H3N2)-like virus (updated)
- B/Washington/02/2019 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus (updated)
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (Yamagata lineage) virus.

Age	Dose
6 months and older ( <b>Injectable</b> )	0.5 ml injection vaccine
2 years to 49 years ( <b>Intranasal</b> )	Same dosage regardless of age; however not available due to limited production

The flu vaccine cannot be given to children under 6 months of age. Therefore, we recommend vaccinating all family members who live with the infant to create “herd immunity.”

**Note:** Children 6 months to younger than 9 years of age may need to receive the vaccine twice separated by at least 4 weeks. See page 4 of this packet for exact details.

**Blue Fish will only be using quadrivalent vaccines for the 2020-2021 season. These immunizations protect against four flu strains.**



The shot prevents serious complications from the flu in 70% to 90% of young, healthy adults.

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*“About 20-50% of the U.S. population gets the flu each season”*

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It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to be effective.

## When to get vaccinated?

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September or as soon as the vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, as late as March or beyond. The timing and duration of influenza seasons vary.

While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in February or later. About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

## One or Two Shots Needed?

If your child is **9 years or older**, regardless of what flu immunizations have been given in the past, they will only need **ONE** immunization this flu season.

However, if your child is **under 9 years of age**, they may need **TWO** immunizations this year. See the chart below to assist you in knowing how many shots your child will need this flu season.

If your child needs 2 flu vaccines this year, they should be spaced apart by a minimum of 4 weeks (28 days). There is no deadline by which the 2<sup>nd</sup> flu vaccine needs to be completed, but once the minimum 4 weeks has passed, the sooner the better as your child will have optimal protection only after the 2<sup>nd</sup> immunization.



*"Seasonal" influenza vaccines are formulated to prevent annual flu.*

	0 flu shots before July 2020	1 flu shot before July of 2020	2 flu shots before July 2020
Under 9 years of age	2 flu shots needed	2 flu shots needed	1 flu shot needed
9 years or older	1 flu shot needed	1 flu shot needed	1 flu shot needed

Check out our website for updates on our flu vaccine availability!  
[www.bluefishmd.com](http://www.bluefishmd.com)

## Egg Allergy Protocol (per CDC)

All children with egg allergy of any severity can receive influenza vaccine without any additional precautions beyond those recommended for any vaccine.

For more information about COVID-19 and Flu, please visit our website at:  
<https://bluefishmd.com/services/covid-19/>

## COVID-19 Social Distancing Changes

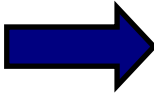
For the 2020 flu season our offices have made the following changes to allow for social distancing while continuing to vaccinate our patients in a timely manner.

- We have reduced the amount of flu shot slots per hour.
- Check in area will have markers on the floor for social distancing. A staff member will hand out paper work and clipboards.
- Our office is encouraging families to come to flu clinics with the paper work completed.

## Woodlands Weekend Parking Instructions

For the weekends of our Blue Fish Flu clinic, our normal weekday parking garage, garage 2, will be closed due to construction. In addition, the open lot in front of garage 2 will be closed as well. Attached you will find a map outlining available **parking in the rear of our building (best option)**. If no parking is available, you can park in **Blue A lot (2nd option)**. Should you have any parking issues or need more guidance, please call our office at 832-562-2009.

2nd  
Option



Best option

Blue Fish  
Pediatrics



## Flu and COVID-19 (www.cdc.gov)

### **What is the difference between Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19?**

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) and flu is caused by infection with influenza viruses. Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two.

### **Can I have flu and COVID-19 at the same time?**

Yes. It is possible to have flu, as well as other respiratory illnesses, and COVID-19 at the same time. Health experts are still studying how common this can be.

Some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, making it hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Diagnostic testing can help determine if you are sick with flu or COVID-19.

### **Will a flu vaccine protect me against COVID-19?**

Getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, however flu vaccination has many other important benefits. Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization and death. Getting a flu vaccine this fall will be more important than ever, not only to reduce your risk from flu but also to help conserve potentially scarce health care resources.

### **Should a flu vaccine be given to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?**

No. Vaccination should be deferred (postponed) for people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of whether they have symptoms, until they have met the criteria to discontinue their isolation. While mild illness is not a contraindication to flu vaccination, vaccination visits for these people should be postponed to avoid exposing healthcare personnel and other patients to the virus that causes COVID-19. When scheduling or confirming appointments for vaccination, patients should be instructed to notify the provider's office or clinic in advance if they currently have or develop any symptoms of COVID-19.

Additionally, a prior infection with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or flu does not protect someone from future flu infections. The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated every year.



## When will the vaccines be available?

During regular office hours (starting in late September), the flu vaccine will only be available at well visits for **all patients of Blue Fish Pediatrics / family members living in the same household with patients younger than 6 months old**. Flu vaccines will also be administered during sick visits at their doctor's recommendation.

The flu vaccine will be administered at all well child visits until supplies are exhausted (no additional appointment or phone call is required).

To help accommodate our busy families, we have designated **two Saturdays** for flu shots (the clinic will still be open on these Saturdays for sick patients). Any Blue Fish The Woodlands patient or parent is eligible to receive the flu vaccine on these specially designated Saturdays (see below for dates). Also eligible are any family member(s) living in the same household with patients younger than 6 months old. On these specially designated Saturdays you will not need an appointment and can walk-in at your convenience for the flu vaccine. For wait times updated every 30 minutes, please subscribe to our twitter feeds at: <http://twitter.com/bluefishmd>

- The availability of certain flu products may be limited towards the end of the flu season. Check our availability of flu products on our website: [bluefishmd.com/services/flu-season/](http://bluefishmd.com/services/flu-season/)
- The intradermal flu vaccine will NOT be available at Blue Fish.
- The recombinant flu vaccine will NOT be available at Blue Fish.



*Family Flu Days will take place on Saturday September 19, and October 17, No appointment is necessary for these specially designated Saturdays.*



Important Dates to Remember (BLUE FISH THE WOODLANDS ONLY):	
Flu vaccines made available to patients during regular clinic hours for well visits only.	<b>Starting in Late September</b>
<b>Family Flu Days *</b>	<b>Saturday September 19, 2020</b> 8:00 AM— 1:00 PM  <b>Saturday October 17, 2020</b> 8:00 AM—1:00 PM
*Because of the high volume, these flu clinics are for BLUE FISH THE WOODLANDS PATIENTS ONLY. For logistical reasons, patients can only receive their flu vaccine at the same location as their PCP (primary care provider).	

## Payment

Please read the following carefully. Regrettably, the following explanation is complicated and beyond our control.

**All parents (and family members who are not Blue Fish patients) receiving the flu vaccine will pay cash prices.** If you would like to receive the flu vaccine via your insurance, please arrange for your flu vaccine through your regular doctor.

**Cash paying patients:** The cost is **\$35** for injection and **\$35** for nasal vaccine. If VFC eligible and VFC flu vaccine is in stock, then the cost is **\$14.85** for the administration fee.

**Medicaid and CHIP:** The vaccine is covered by your insurance as long as we have the VFC flu vaccine in stock. If we should run out of VFC stock, you can pay the cash price for the vaccine.

**Commercial Insurance:** You will need to pay your copay for your insurance. Even if your copay is higher than what we charge our cash paying patients, we are contractually obligated by the insurance carrier to charge you the full copay amount. Insurance companies are firm concerning this matter. We apologize for this inconvenience, but we are contractually obligated to do so. You have the option of receiving the flu vaccine elsewhere such as a grocery store or pharmacy for their cash price (as they are not contracted with your insurance company.)

### Blue Fish Pediatrics

920 Medical Plaza Drive

Shenandoah, TX 77380

Phone: 832-562-2009

Fax: 832-562-2007

Email:

[bluefishwoodlands@bluefishmd.com](mailto:bluefishwoodlands@bluefishmd.com)

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