

# BLUE FISH PEDIATRICS

www.bluefishmd.com

## GREATER HEIGHTS 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



## 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.

### People who **SHOULD NOT** get a flu shot include:

- Children younger than 6 months of age are too young to get a flu shot.
- People with severe, life-threatening allergies to any ingredient in a flu vaccine (other than egg proteins) should not get that vaccine. This might include gelatin, antibiotics, or other ingredients.
- People who have had a severe allergic reaction to a dose of influenza vaccine should not get that flu vaccine again and might not be able to receive other influenza vaccines if you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralyzing illness, also called GBS).

### Some people should not get the nasal spray flu vaccine:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 50 years and older
- People with a history of severe allergic reaction to any ingredient of the vaccine or to a previous dose of any flu vaccine
- Children 2 through 17 years old who are receiving aspirin- or salicylate-containing medications.
- Children 2 through 4 years old who have asthma or who have had a history of wheezing in the past 12 months
- People with weakened immune systems (immunosuppression) from any cause
- People who care for severely immunocompromised persons who require a protected environment (or otherwise avoid contact with those persons for 7 days after getting the nasal spray vaccine)
- People without a spleen, or with a non-functioning spleen
- Pregnant people
- People with an active leak between the cerebrospinal fluid and the mouth, nose, ear, or other place within the skull
- People with cochlear implants
- People who have taken [flu antiviral drugs](#) within a certain amount of time. (48 hours for oseltamivir and zanamivir, 5 days for peramivir, and 17 days for baloxavir.)

### In addition, the following medical conditions are precautions to the use of the nasal spray flu vaccine:

- Asthma in people 5 years and older.
- Other underlying medical conditions that can put people at higher risk of serious flu complications. These include conditions such as lung disease, heart disease (except isolated hypertension), kidney disease (like diabetes), kidney or liver disorders, neurologic/neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders.
- Moderate or severe acute illness with or without fever.
- Guillain-Barré Syndrome within 6 weeks following a previous dose of flu vaccine.

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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.

# 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)

# 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 2021-2022 influenza season (northern hemisphere winter) contain the following:

- an A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- an A/Cambodia/e0826360/2020 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Washington/02/2019- like virus (B/Victoria lineage)
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata lineage)

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.”

In healthy children 2-8 years of age, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) no longer recommends a preference for the intranasal spray flu vaccine over the injectable flu vaccine as new data from more recent seasons have not confirmed superior effectiveness of the intranasal vaccine. Both the intranasal and injectable are equally recommended.

Age	Dose
Injectible Flu Vaccine	0.5 ml injection vaccine regardless of age
Intranasal Flu Vaccine	Same dosage regardless of age; limited supply this year

**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.



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

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



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 2021	1 flu shot before July of 2021	2 flu shots before July 2021
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/>

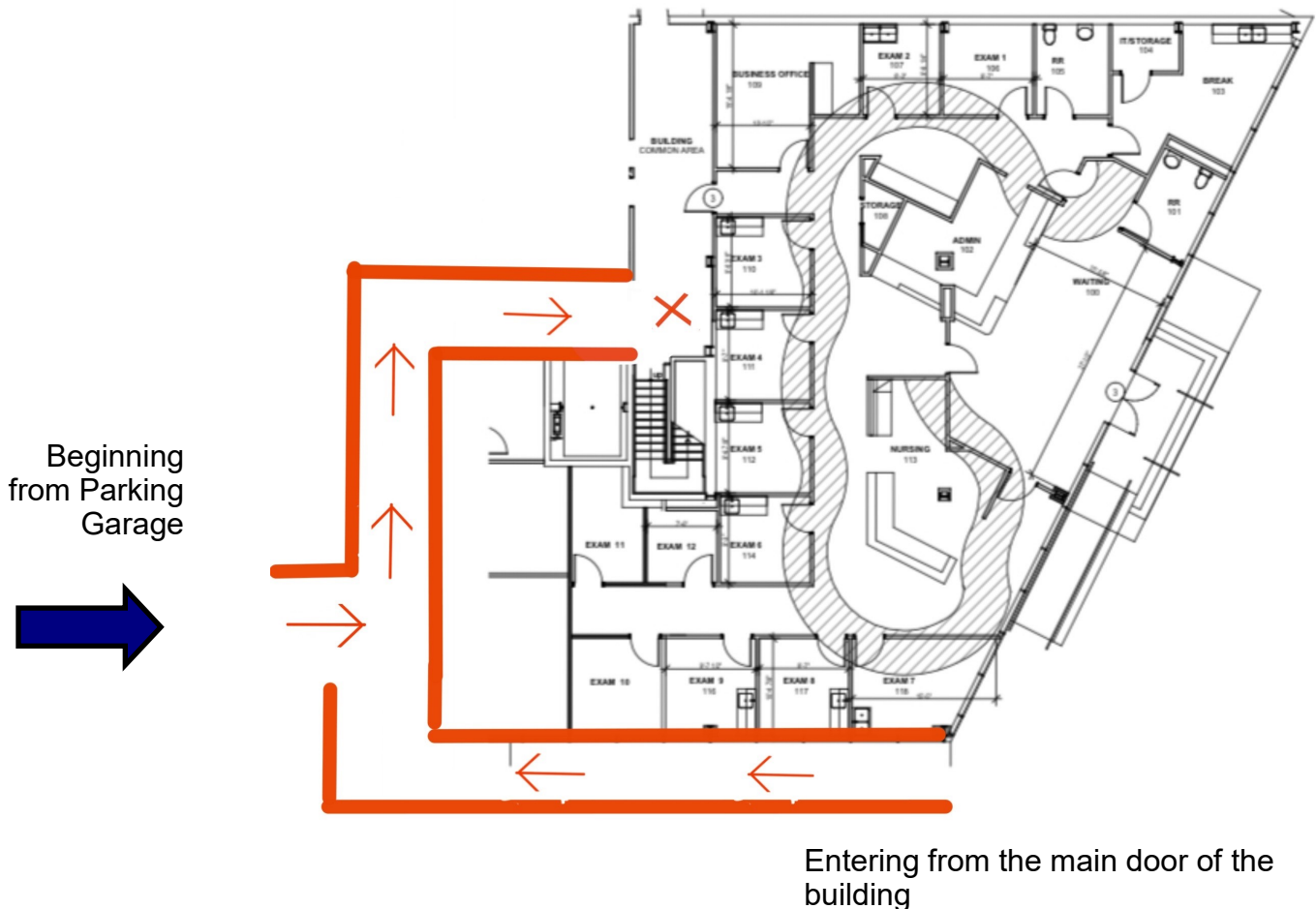
## COVID-19 Social Distancing Changes

For the 2021 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 you a QR Code to fill out the paperwork online.
- Please be prepared to fill out the paperwork online by having your phone ready.

## Heights Clinic Flow Instructions

For the Greater Heights flu clinic, we will have a line that begins outside of our suite in the interior corridor of the building. Below shows a map starting at the parking garage, as well as the main entrance, leading to the back entrance of our office. Once you enter the last hallway before our office, you will encounter Blue Fish staff ready to check you in. Please have your paperwork filled out to expedite the check in process. Should you have any questions or need more guidance, please call our office at 713-461-8070.





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

### **Can I get the flu shot and COVID Vaccine at the same time?**

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 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 Greater Heights 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 25, October 23, November 6, and November 20. No appointment is necessary for these specially designated Saturdays.*

Important Dates to Remember (BLUE FISH GREATER HEIGHTS 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 25, 2021</b> 8:00 AM— 1:00 PM  <b>Saturday October 23, 2021</b> 8:00 AM—1:00 PM  <b>Saturday November 6, 2021</b> 8:00 AM—1:00 PM  <b>Saturday November 20, 2021</b> 8:00 AM—1:00 PM
*Because of the high volume, these flu clinics are for BLUE FISH GREATER HEIGHTS PATIENTS ONLY. For logistical reasons, patients can only receive their flu vaccine at the same location as their PCP (primary care provider).	



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## 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.)