

Don't waste fall by being sick. Get a flu shot; it's super quick !

As the weather becomes colder, our days become shorter, and our wardrobe turns from shorts to jeans, we know fall and winter are slowly approaching! One way we can take action to protect our health is by getting a flu shot. A new respiratory virus, COVID-19, has been introduced into our communities. This virus is caused by infection with a new coronavirus strain (called SARS-CoV-2), which may often “copy” signs and symptoms of the flu.

Flu vaccination has significant benefits. It can reduce flu illnesses, doctor's visits, and missed work and school due to flu and prevent flu-related hospitalizations. This year more than ever, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all individuals six months and older, including pregnant women, receive a yearly flu shot to protect themselves and others from getting the flu. A person sick with the flu can quickly develop a secondary infection such as pneumonia or the coronavirus this year.

According to Judy Persichilli, Health Commissioner, the national goal is to have 70% of the population vaccinated. Despite eliminating many workplace flu shot clinics and big events at local health departments, health officials are still urging people to get the vaccination during September-October to protect themselves from the virus's effects. The typical flu season starts in October and can extend to May.

Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between the viruses based on symptoms alone. Testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis.

Symptoms of the flu include:

- **Muscle Aches**
- **Headaches**
- **Runny Nose**
- **Tiredness**
- **Fever**
- **Cough**
- **Sore Throat**

COVID-19 shares symptoms similar to the flu, but adds the loss or change in taste and smell.

If a person has COVID-19, it could take them longer to develop symptoms versus the flu. A person with the flu will usually show signs 1-4 days, and someone with COVID-19 can develop symptoms 2 to 14 days after infection.

To avoid getting or spreading the flu, you should stay home from social activities as much as possible. Severe complications of the virus can result in hospitalization or even death. Most people who get influenza will recover in several days to less than two weeks, but some will develop complications such as pneumonia due to the flu.

Both can be prevented by mask-wearing, frequent and thorough hand washing, coughing into the crook of your elbow, staying home when sick, and limiting contact with infected people. Physical distancing limits the spread of flu and COVID-19 in communities.

Please visit your primary doctor or call your local pharmacy (CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid) for flu clinics' times and locations to receive your annual flu shot. You may also call the Mahwah Health Department at 201-529-5757 option 2 for assistance.

For more information on influenza, please visit the CDC's website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>.