

What you should know about coronavirus 2019 during flu season

- Getting a flu shot will help keep people out of the hospital and allow room, if needed, to treat patients sickened by the coronavirus disease 2019 (or COVID-19).
- The flu vaccine will not help reduce your risk of COVID-19 infection, but it will reduce your risk of serious complications from the flu.
- During flu season and a time when we are seeing a new respiratory illness—COVID-19—it is important to preserve our healthcare system to be able to care for patients most in need. Getting a flu shot can help keep you out of emergency care facilities.
- The flu virus is always circulating but flu season typically starts in October and ends in April or May.
- The flu shot will protect you throughout the season. You need to get a flu shot each season.
- It is not too late to get vaccinated.

Key messages for the public

- There are many respiratory illnesses circulating in Rhode Island, such as the flu and the common cold. Having respiratory symptoms does not mean that you have COVID-19.
- People are at higher risk for COVID-19 if:
 - they have symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath) AND if have had direct, face-to-face contact with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19
 - they have traveled to country with community transmission, such as China, Italy, South Korea, Iran, and Japan.
- People who think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider. These people should not go directly to a healthcare facility without calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency).
- People with general questions about COVID-19 can visit www.health.ri.gov/covid or call **401-222-8022**. **This is the COVID-19 Hotline** that RIDOH has available to the public.
- Everyone can help stop the spread of viruses in Rhode Island.
 - Get your flu shot, and make sure the people around you do the same.
 - Wash your hands often throughout the day. Use warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel.
 - Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Viruses can spread by coughing or sneezing on other people or into your hands.
 - Stay home from work or school if you are sick.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.
 - Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.

