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This Flu Season, Getting Vaccinated is More Important Than Ever

**Immunization Offers Best Defense Against Getting or Spreading the Flu,
and Helps Protect Against Contracting Other Infectious Diseases, Including COVID-19**

Woodland Hills, Calif., Sept. 1, 2021 — Getting your flu shot this year will be more important than ever, health experts advise, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Every year, physicians recommend getting vaccinated as a way to protect yourself against contracting or spreading influenza. But this year our health crisis has made this single act of preventative care especially critical at protecting yourself from a disease that plagues millions.

“The flu virus will weaken your immune system, making you more vulnerable to catching other respiratory infections, including COVID-19, and that’s why getting vaccinated this year is so important,” said [Dr. Margaret Khoury](#), an infectious disease specialist who is Kaiser Permanente Southern California’s COVID-19 and influenza vaccination program physician lead.

She noted having the flu and COVID-19 at the same time would be devastating to your health. “The influenza vaccine remains the most effective prevention against contracting the flu and its complications,” Dr. Khoury explained.

In most years, millions of people get the flu, and hundreds of thousands of individuals end up in the emergency room or hospitalized with severe complications, said [Dr. David Bronstein](#), who also practices at Kaiser Permanente Southern California.

“We’re preparing for a worse influenza season this year,” he noted. “Last year, we didn’t see many flu cases, possibly due to the precautions we all took and because the coronavirus crowded out the flu.”

Dr. Khoury said getting the flu vaccine is very important, but especially for the most sensitive populations. They include the elderly, pregnant women, children younger than five years of age, along with those with chronic health conditions, she explained.

When it comes to children who never received the flu vaccine before, those under age 8 will need to receive two flu shots, with a booster vaccine given 28 days after the first inoculation. Parents are

strongly encouraged to vaccinate their children this year, as many children have resumed in-person learning at their schools, and will be more susceptible to being infected with the flu virus as they interact with other students and teachers.

“A common misconception is that a flu shot will give you the flu,” Dr. Bronstein noted. “That’s simply not true. You cannot contract the flu from getting a flu shot. Side effects, when they do occur, are typically very mild. However, by not getting vaccinated, you put yourself and your loved ones at a greater risk of getting the flu, which causes serious illness, hospitalizations and thousands of deaths each year.”

Kaiser Permanente members are encouraged to visit kp.org/flu or call the flu hotline number at 1-866-706-6358 for information on how to safely get your free flu vaccine at Kaiser Permanente facilities across Southern California.

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