

DSHS News Release: DSHS encourages Texans to get vaccinated now as flu season begins

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DSHS encourages Texans to get vaccinated now as flu season begins *Tuesday is Texas Influenza Awareness Day*

The Texas Department of State Health Services recommends that everyone 6 months old and older get vaccinated now to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications.

“It takes about two weeks for immunity to develop after getting the flu vaccine. So, we are asking all Texans 6 months of age and older to get their flu vaccines before the end of October,” said Dr. Jennifer Shuford, DSHS Infectious Disease Medical Officer.

Getting vaccinated is especially important for people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, young children and older adults because they are at higher risk of developing serious complications from the flu. Caregivers should get the flu shot to protect themselves and to prevent spreading the flu to the vulnerable people they care for in their families and communities.

Influenza is an illness caused by one of a number of related viruses. Symptoms usually start suddenly and include fever, body aches, chills, a dry cough, sore throat, runny nose, headaches and extreme fatigue and can last a week or longer. It is important to note that not all flu sufferers will have a fever.

People can help stop the spread of illness and reduce their chance of catching the flu by getting vaccinated, washing hands frequently, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home if they're sick. Additional flu information and tips are at [TexasFlu.org](https://www.texasflu.org).

All flu vaccines this season are made to protect against viruses similar to the strains A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1), A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2) and B/Colorado/06/2017 (B/Victoria lineage). Some vaccines include an additional vaccine virus strain, B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage). The influenza A components of the vaccine were updated this year to better match the flu viruses expected to be circulating this season.

People can contact their health care provider, local health department, local pharmacy or use the Vaccine Finder at [TexasFlu.org](https://www.texasflu.org) to find out where flu shots are available.

Health officials encourage people to seek treatment quickly if they are experiencing flu symptoms. Antiviral drugs may help shorten the duration or lessen the severity of the flu if started within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms.

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