



News Release

For immediate release: November 15, 2021

(21-224)

Contact: [DOH Communications](#)

Pediatric flu vaccinations down about 25% from this time last year

Sharp decline in childhood flu vaccination rates is concerning

OLYMPIA – Childhood flu vaccine rates have dropped significantly this fall compared to the previous two flu seasons. Now, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is encouraging families to get themselves and their children vaccinated as soon as possible to keep people safe and out of the hospital, especially as we head into the holiday season.

Flu is a highly contagious disease that can cause severe illness and death, even in healthy people. Recent data from the Washington state immunization information system shows flu vaccinations were down about 25% during the months of September and October for kids ages 6 months through 5 years old. Since [last year's flu activity was very low](#), we expect fewer people to have natural immunity this year due to a lack of exposure, especially in younger age groups.

“Flu can be serious for kids, and a flu vaccine is the best way to protect them. With the holidays quickly approaching, it is crucial parents take precautionary steps now to keep everyone in the family healthy and safe,” said Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, Chief Science Officer. “A flu vaccine is especially important this year due to the potential dangers of both flu and COVID-19 circulating at the same time.”

[Flu activity](#) is unpredictable. The timing, severity, and length can change from one year to the next. Typically, flu activity peaks between December and February, although significant activity can last as late as May.

“We are concerned that our youngest children remain vulnerable to both flu and COVID-19 illness,” said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. “Although the COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available for kids 4 and under, the flu vaccine is. As parents, we want to do everything

Flu vaccination rates concerning

November 15, 2021

Page 2

in our power to protect our children – and vaccination is an important tool that’s available to every family in Washington.”

The flu vaccine is available at pharmacies, clinics, and health care provider offices across the state. To search for flu vaccines, visit [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. When children get their flu vaccine, it is a great time to ensure they are up to date on their other routine childhood immunizations as well. People age 5 and older who are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine can receive it on the same day they receive the flu vaccine.

For weekly flu activity reports, educational materials, vaccine information, and other flu prevention resources, visit www.KnockOutFlu.org.

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

###