



News Release

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### **Area residents encouraged to get flu shots to reduce burden on health care system**

For Immediate Release

**(COLUMBUS, Neb.)** – Flu season – which begins in the fall and can last through spring – is always a busy time for health care providers. This year, flu season will be even busier as it will happen in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent weeks, COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have reached record highs. To preserve the state’s health care resources, Gov. Pete Ricketts recently encouraged Nebraskans to get a flu shot.

“The coronavirus has created new challenges for our healthcare system,” Ricketts said in a recent press release. “By getting flu shots, Nebraskans are protecting themselves against illness and helping to preserve capacity in our hospitals.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), getting an annual flu vaccine is the “first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.”

The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get an annual flu vaccine in the fall, ideally by the end of October. That’s because it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu.

Flu vaccination is particularly important for people who are at high risk of developing severe flu illnesses. This includes pregnant women; young children; people with chronic health conditions like diabetes, asthma and heart or lung disease, and people who are 65 years old or older. The CDC noted that people who are at higher risk from flu also appear to be at a higher risk of developing more severe cases of COVID-19.

People who live with or care for people who are at higher risk from flu are also encouraged to get a flu vaccination, as are people who care for infants younger than 6 months who are too young to be vaccinated.



According to CDC estimates, last flu season fewer than half all Americans got a flu shot and at least 410,000 people were hospitalized with flu. They noted that, "Increased vaccination coverage would reduce that burden."

Most insurance plans cover flu shots at no cost to the patient, as do Medicare Part B and Medicaid in Nebraska.

Local primary care providers are currently offering flu shots and CCH's Occupational Health Services also offers flu shots through its office at 3005 19th Street, Suite 300 in Columbus. For more information on vaccinations through Occupational Health Services, call 402-562-4480. To search for additional locations offering flu shots, visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/>

Since both influenza and COVID-19 are contagious respiratory illnesses, it may be hard to tell the difference between the two. Visit the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm> to learn the difference. To find out more about COVID-19 testing through CCH, visit [www.columbushosp.org](http://www.columbushosp.org).

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