

# FLU VACCINATION DURING COVID

Protecting our island community

**Together**, San Juan Island healthcare partners have committed to share accurate information about Influenza disease and vaccines and to offer easy access to immunization for all Islanders using a drive-through process that has worked exceptionally well around the country. This year poses an extraordinary potential risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it crucial that Influenza vaccine is administered early and to as many people as possible.

## What is Influenza?

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Illnesses caused by the viruses Influenza types A and B occur every year. It is the only illness that causes seasonal spikes in total deaths from all causes. Thousands of lives are lost annually in this country with even larger numbers possible if spread reaches epidemic levels.

## Why Influenza vaccine is so important this year?

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Influenza and COVID-19 are similar, featuring respiratory spread, fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle pain, pneumonia, and weakness. Other fall and winter season viruses trigger the same symptoms. Loss of smell is unique to COVID-19. All these illnesses can be spread by symptom-free people, especially children. It is not yet known if Influenza and COVID-19 can occur in the body at the same time nor if this will result in serious illness. This makes it critical to receive timely flu vaccination this season.

## Why do I need Influenza vaccine every year?

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Influenza viruses change in small ways every year. This means our immune response needs to be 'reeducated'. In pandemic years, these changes were huge and hit vulnerable populations worst. The challenge of manufacturing flu vaccines is that a prior year's vaccine is less likely to protect you.

## How effective is the vaccine?

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Compared to other vaccines such as those for measles (95%+) or shingles (70-90%), Influenza vaccine isn't all that great: for 2019-2020 it was 47%. So, if it is less than 50/50 why bother? The answer is that those who got the vaccine and were still infected, were less sick, ill for a shorter time, and less likely to spread the virus. **By protecting ourselves, we protect others as well!**



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## Common questions

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### “I get it, but last time I got the vaccine, I got sick after!”

Often, Influenza vaccine may cause some soreness at the injection site. Occasionally there may be swelling. Some people do have a fever and body aches which is often mistaken for the disease itself and is a short-lived immune reaction to the vaccine. There may be other rare complications, but as each year the vaccines are further purified, all reactions have decreased. If you have any concerns or questions about possible reactions, please discuss them with your primary care provider

### “Isn’t Influenza vaccine only for older people?”

Indeed, Influenza is a major cause of illness and hospitalization in the elderly especially those who already have serious breathing or heart conditions or other illness such as diabetes and kidney failure, accounting for about 80% of the death. However, many others are at risk including those with compromised immune systems and many other chronic diseases. Pandemic Influenza in the past has preferentially targeted otherwise healthy young adults and infants.

## What about children and Influenza?

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Last flu season, more children were hospitalized and died from Influenza than have from COVID-19. Most of those kids had not received the flu vaccine. Children play a key role in spreading Influenza to household members so protecting children protects others. Women may receive Influenza vaccine (INACTIVATED only) at any time during pregnancy. Vaccination protects mother and baby as immunity is transferred before birth to infants and lasts for the first few months of life. This important as there are NO flu vaccines for infants under six months of age.

**Special note:** Children over nine years of age require only one dose every year. Children between the age of six months and nine years of age need “priming” if they had not received Influenza vaccine in the past. They require two doses one month apart the first time they get the Influenza vaccine.

## Where and when can I get my Influenza vaccine?

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Contact your local doctor’s office or Pharmacy and ask to be scheduled for vaccine.

- Eventide Health (360) 378-1338
- Friday Harbor Drug (360) 378-4421 option 5
- PeaceHealth (360) 378-1756

Drive-thru Influenza vaccination clinics for **adults only** will be hosted at the San Juan County Fairgrounds in Friday Harbor on:

Wednesday, October 21, 2020 from 12:00 to 4:30 p.m.  
Sunday, November 1, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.