



## Public Health Brief

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## Should You Get A Flu Shot – Now or Later?

The short answer is YES, but LATER rather than now for older adults (>65 years of age)!

### Why wait?

Data shows that older adults begin to lose their protection sooner than younger folks. Timing is important in order to have maximum protection through the entire flu season. We recognize that flu shots are now available at many locations but recommend that older adults delay receiving their shot until we see some fall colors!

### Why get a flu vaccine?

1. Millions of people get the flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands of people die. A sure bet – we will have a flu season this coming winter!
2. A flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications. During the 2017-18 flu season, vaccination prevented an estimated 7 million illnesses, 109,000 hospitalizations, and 8,000 deaths associated with influenza. Flu vaccine can reduce illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school. During recent seasons, flu vaccine has reduced the risk of flu illness by between 40% and 60%. While some people who have received a flu vaccine still get the flu, studies show it can make their illness less severe, with reduced ICU admissions and length of hospital stay.
3. During the last flu season, there were 126 flu-related pediatric deaths reported to the CDC. A recent study was the first of its kind to show that flu vaccination can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from influenza.



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4. People 65 years and older are at high risk of serious, flu-related complications because their immune systems become weaker with age. In addition, patients that have an underlying medical condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or pregnancy have an additional factor putting them at risk of serious complications from influenza. During recent seasons, approximately 70% to 90% of seasonal flu-related deaths in the United States have occurred among people 65 years and older. About 50% to 70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people 65 years and older.

5. Remember that flu vaccine not only protects you, but it also can help protect those around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, such as babies, young children, older adults, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions.

6. For more than 50 years, hundreds of millions of people have safely received seasonal flu vaccines with extensive research supporting its safety. Side effects from vaccination are generally mild, especially compared with symptoms of flu! A flu vaccine cannot cause flu infection.

### **Where can I get the shot?**

You have a choice of locations to receive your flu vaccine. Your pharmacy or your healthcare provider will most likely be able to provide a shot for you.

In Alpine County, we will have flu shots available at the Health Department Clinic, at the Community Health Fair on October 10<sup>th</sup>, and at the drive-through Flu Clinic on Nov 6<sup>th</sup>. We will have the high-dose flu vaccine available for the first time, which is recommended for adults >65 years of age. We will be billing insurance or Medicare, so cost should not be a factor in your decision.



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