



## News

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### **Vaccinate Before You Celebrate This Holiday Season**

*Charleston, W.VA (November 9, 2020)* – With the holiday season quickly approaching, the West Virginia Immunization Network (WIN) is encouraging all West Virginians to get the flu vaccination before celebrating with family and friends.

Due to this year's flu season coinciding with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, health officials across the nation are stressing the importance of the flu vaccination to help keep individuals and families safe and to reduce the number of people needing medical services during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, getting a flu vaccine will be more important than ever.

The CDC has offered considerations to help individuals and their families plan for safe fall and winter activities and recommends considering COVID-19 levels in their community to determine if one should postpone, cancel, or limit the number of guests at their holiday celebrations. To read the CDC's considerations on holiday celebrations, visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html).

To prevent the spread of the flu in homes and communities, getting the flu vaccine is strongly recommended, especially for individuals who decide to spend the holidays with loved ones.

Health organizations agree the flu vaccination is the best preventive measure one can take to protect themselves and others from getting the flu.

It's important to know that it takes about two weeks after vaccination for the flu vaccine to be fully effective, so getting the flu vaccine now will help to ensure individuals are protected from the flu before heading into the holidays.

Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months and older, with rare exceptions. WIN urges individuals considered at high risk for flu-related complications to be especially careful during the holiday and flu season. Individuals considered to be at high risk for flu are young children under the age of five, adults over sixty-five, and individuals with a chronic disease, weakened immune system or who are extremely obese.

Flu vaccines are available at doctors' offices, hospitals, community health centers, school-based health centers, free clinics, health departments, pharmacies, and in some cases, by employers.

Most insurance plans cover childhood and adult vaccines. However, if you or your family have lost health insurance, there may be programs available to help you get the flu vaccine. The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program is a federal program that provides vaccines for children eighteen years of age and younger who are uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native. For help finding a local health care provider who participates in the VFC program, ask your child's health care provider or contact a local health department.

For adults who do not have insurance or whose health insurance does not cover the flu vaccine, free vaccines will be available at community health centers and local health departments.

It's critical to take all precautions seriously when it comes to getting sick, especially as COVID-19 persists throughout the Mountain State. Vaccination, hand washing, wearing a mask or face covering and physical distancing will help reduce the spread of the flu and COVID-19 in our communities.

For more information about the flu and flu vaccination, talk to your health care provider or visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) .

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The West Virginia Immunization Network (WIN) is a statewide coalition of more than 400 individuals and organizations who work to protect West Virginians from vaccine-preventable diseases. The Center for Rural Health Development, a non-profit organization with the mission of improving the health of West Virginians and strengthening West Virginia's health care delivery system, serves as the lead agency for WIN.