

Our Take: Amplifying the Call for Flu Shots during COVID-19

December 2, 2020

The annual flu shot refrain continues, though welcomed COVID-19 vaccine updates seem to drown it out. While some may hesitate to go to a doctor's office or pharmacy during a pandemic, the CDC says getting the flu shot during COVID-19 is *even more* important this year than years past. Employers may want to emphasize this guidance to help keep their workforce and communities healthier this winter.

The ongoing medical crisis may make the routine flu shot seem unimportant. However, getting the flu shot can help prevent strain on medical resources. A 2018 study showed that adults who received the flu vaccine were 82% less likely to be admitted to an intensive care unit for the flu. They were also 59% less likely to have severe illness.¹ These were encouraging outcomes before and even more so in 2020. Both COVID-19 and seasonal influenza are viral respiratory illnesses, and fewer flu patients mean a reduced burden on the healthcare system with more resources available for treating those with COVID-19.²

In addition to the flu shot, children are also missing important immunizations against highly contagious diseases, including measles, whooping cough and polio according to new data from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. This first nine months of 2020 saw as much as a 26% drop in these vaccinations. This could lead to increased cases of these preventable diseases and reduced community protection.³

Employers may need to get creative when communicating the importance of vaccines this year. With many workplaces operating remotely, the typical in-person flu shot promotion and in-office immunizations aren't an option. Employers could consider virtual options, mailed reminders, or even drive-through immunization events.⁴

**Work with your benefits broker to develop topic-specific
[communications campaigns](#) customized for your unique workforce.**

While COVID-19 remains a critical crisis, the importance of the flu shot shouldn't be forgotten. It remains an essential tool in reducing health care costs and keeping workforces and communities healthy. ■

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¹ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), "Study Shows Flu Vaccine Reduces Risk of Severe Illness."

² [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), "Protect Your Health This Season."

³ [Blue Cross Blue Shield Association](#), "Missing Vaccinations during COVID-19 Puts our Children & Communities at Risk."

⁴ [Employee Benefit News](#), "How to Encourage your Employees to Stay Up-to-date on Vaccinations."