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Florida's Largest Health Care Organizations Join Forces to Fight the Flu

(Tallahassee, Fla.) – Wear a mask. Stay six feet apart. Wash your hands. These have become recognizable maxims of our health lexicon for the past eight months. But there is one more that cannot be forgotten - Get your flu shot.

As the number of COVID-19 cases in the state have begun to increase, the potentially devastating collision of COVID-19 and the flu (twindemic) this season is real. That is why [Florida Blue](#), the Florida Hospital Association ([FHA](#)) and the Florida Medical Association ([FMA](#)) today joined together to encourage Floridians to get a flu shot so all may have a #FluFreeFlorida.

The organizations are uniting to use their collective and powerful voices to raise awareness around the state about the importance of getting a flu vaccine this year, encouraging all to 'spread the word, not the flu,' by using #FluFreeFlorida on social media. Floridians should be immunized to prevent severe illness and to keep the health care system from being overwhelmed with both COVID-19 and flu cases.

"Flu shots can protect everyone in your family, from your 6-month-old baby to your 100-year-old great-grandmother," said Dr. Elana Schrader, senior vice president of health care services for Florida Blue, Florida's Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan. "The health and safety of our communities is our top priority, which is why we strongly encourage Floridians to protect themselves, their loved ones and neighbors by getting a flu vaccine."

While influenza seasons vary in intensity, adults in the 65+ age group bear the greatest burden of severe influenza disease. In Florida, an average of 80 percent of seasonal pneumonia and influenza deaths occurred in adults age 65 and over during the last five flu seasons.

The flu vaccine can be given to almost anyone six-months of age and older. A flu shot is especially important for high-risk groups, including senior citizens, children, pregnant women and people with asthma, heart disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and other pre-existing conditions.

Most people with health insurance can get a flu shot at no cost when they go to a doctor or pharmacy that is in their network. There are many local events planned around the state to ensure each eligible Floridian has access to a flu vaccine. There are also numerous resources for those without insurance. Check www.ThePowerToProtect.org or <http://flshotsusers.com/search/provider> to find additional information.

"Over the past several months, hospital teams across the state have worked together to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Now, we unite against the flu," said FHA President and CEO Mary Mayhew. "Getting a flu vaccination will help reduce the burden on our healthcare system's response to COVID19 and preserve medical resources for those who need it most – our elderly neighbors, friends with chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes and thousands of Floridians at risk for hospitalization."

"On behalf of Florida Medical Association's more than 25,000 members, we are proud to be part of this renewed effort to spread the word, not the flu this season in providing the vaccine for our patients,"



said FMA President Mike Patete, M.D. "Our physicians stand ready to encourage and administer flu shots without delay."

Florida Blue

Florida Blue, Florida's Blue Cross and Blue Shield company, has been providing health insurance to residents of Florida for more than 75 years. Driven by its mission of helping people and communities achieve better health, the company serves more than 5 million health care members across the state. In total, Florida Blue and its affiliated companies serve 27 million people in 35 states. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., it is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Florida Hospital Association

Founded in 1927, the Florida Hospital Association (FHA) comprises over 200 hospitals and health systems from across the state. Through representation and advocacy, education and informational services, we support the mission of our members to provide the highest quality of care to the patients we serve. The association is governed by a Board of Trustees and officers elected by the member institutions. For more information, visit www.fha.org.

Florida Medical Association

Founded in 1874, the FMA is a professional association dedicated to the service and assistance of Doctors of Medicine and Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine in Florida. The FMA represents more than 25,000 members on issues of legislation and regulatory affairs, medical economics and education, public health, and ethical and legal issues. The association advocates for physicians and their patients to promote the public health, ensure the highest standards of medical practice, and to enhance the quality and availability of health care in the Sunshine State. For more information on the FMA, please visit www.flmedical.org, follow [@FloridaMedical](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaMedical) and like [FB.com/FloridaMedical](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaMedical).

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