



## American Heart Association CEO Roundtable Calls for Flu Vaccine to Protect Employee Health

An Issue Brief | September 2, 2020

Now more than ever, employers are taking action to keep employees and their family members healthy as the 2020–21 influenza season collides with the COVID-19 pandemic. A COVID-19 infection spike [combined with flu season](#) could result in a critically overburdened healthcare system this coming fall and winter. Widespread flu vaccine coverage may mitigate the effects of the collision of flu and COVID-19.

Members of the [American Heart Association CEO Roundtable](#) are leading the way to protect employees and their communities to improve influenza vaccination rates with a renewed effort to promote and incentivize getting the vaccine.

In any other year, hosting a flu vaccination clinic at the workplace would be a leading strategy, but given the pandemic, CEO Roundtable members are leading alternative approaches to support higher vaccination compliance. Strategies include:

- Providing flexible human resources (HR) policies:
  - Establish policies that allow employees to take an hour or two out of their workday to seek flu vaccinations in the community using retail pharmacies, health department distribution sites that may offer drive through options.
  - Incentivize compliance with the flu vaccine with monetary or other benefit perks.
  - Encourage and cover flu vaccination costs for employees' families.
- Utilizing digital resources to advertise locations in the community that offer seasonal flu vaccinations that comply with guidelines to stop the spread of COVID-19.

For adults in the United States, flu vaccine must be among the very top preventive health priorities this coming autumn. Without a vaccine available at this time to prevent infection with COVID-19, CEO Roundtable members are helping to control what can be controlled – washing hands, physically distancing, wearing masks, and, come this fall, getting a flu vaccination.

The CEO Roundtable is calling for urgent action using innovative approaches to encourage vaccination and reach [80+% of U.S. adults](#)— up from the [45% of adults](#) vaccinated in the 2018–2019 season. This challenge is needed to protect those at increased risk from serious health complications and to reduce the demand for clinical care and hospitalizations. Employers are a critical avenue for vaccine adherence. A CEO Roundtable–commissioned survey with [Harris Poll](#) revealed that 68% of employees take advantage of flu shots offered by employers and 63% of employees named flu shots as the benefit with the biggest impact on their health.

A recent study in [Circulation](#) found that in patients with heart failure, influenza vaccination was associated with a reduced risk of both. Annual vaccination and vaccination earlier in the year were associated with larger reductions in the risk of death than infrequent vaccination.

During the 2018–2019 season, [93% of adults hospitalized for the flu](#) reported at least one underlying medical condition that placed them at high-risk for complications. Older patients may also face

catastrophic disability and loss of independence due to the flu, crippling their ability to be active and permanently impacting their [quality of life](#). Annual flu vaccination has been shown to mitigate these risks in patients with chronic health conditions—reducing the chance of hospitalization by 37% and reducing the risk of admission to the intensive care [unit by 82%](#).

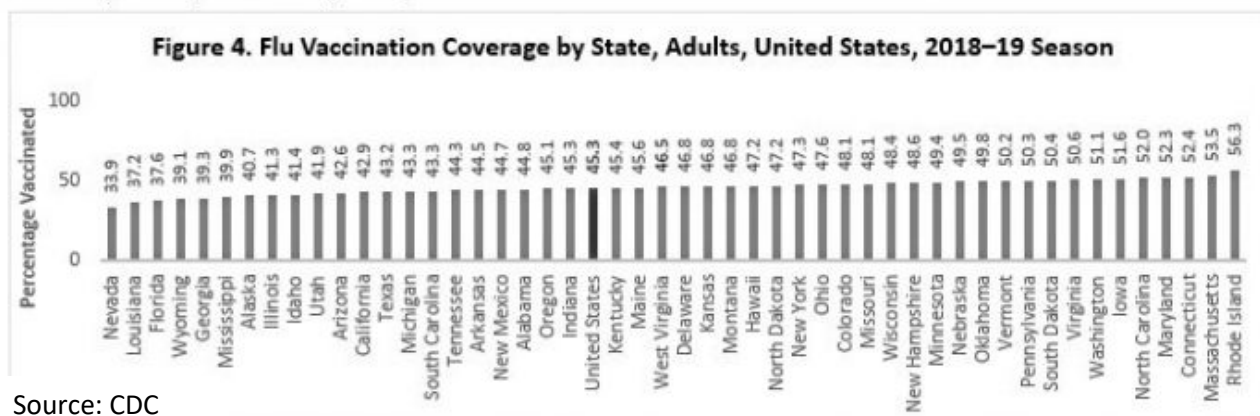
“Getting the flu can lead to complications with very serious consequences, particularly for [the 117 million](#) people with chronic disease that may include hospitalization, increased risk for other major health events like heart attacks or strokes, and death,” said Eduardo Sanchez, M.D., American Heart Association Chief Medical Officer for Prevention. “Flu vaccination is more important than ever as we seek to mitigate the coronavirus.”

How and where people get a flu vaccine may need to change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CDC is working with healthcare providers and state and local health departments to develop contingency plans on how to vaccinate people against flu without increasing their risk of exposure to respiratory germs, like the virus that causes COVID-19.

By championing vaccination, CEO Roundtable members are working with the American Heart Association to save lives and preserve quality of life for employees across the nation including millions of Americans and their family members. [Getting a vaccination](#) can protect you from getting the flu and spreading it to others. The flu vaccine is [recommended](#) for everyone over 6 months old. Consult with your healthcare provider about whether this or any vaccine is appropriate for you.

#### Resources:

The American Heart Association CEO Roundtable is a leadership collaborative of 46 members who collectively represent more than 13 million employees and their family members. The Roundtable is committed to implementing evidence-based approaches to combat rising health challenges, to empower employees and build stronger corporate cultures. To learn more, visit [Heart.org/CEORoundtable](#).



Source: CDC

While more is learned every day, there is still a lot that is unknown about COVID-19 and the virus that causes it. [This table](#) compares COVID-19 and flu, given the best available information to date.

To learn more about COVID-19, visit [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

To learn more about flu, visit [Influenza \(Flu\)](#).