

**An Important Message from
The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)**

**DSHS recommends early immunization to prevent serious illness
as new flu season begins this month**

Today is Texas Influenza Awareness Day, and DSHS encourages Texans to get immunized against flu as soon as possible to protect themselves and their families from illness.

“We recommend everyone ages six months and older get a flu shot as soon as possible because we usually see cases start to rise at this time of year,” said DSHS Chief Medical Executive Manda Hall, MD. “Small children and older adults, pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions often suffer the most severe effects from flu illness. The best time to protect yourself and your family from flu is now because the body takes about two weeks to make flu antibodies after getting a flu shot.”

People with flu are most contagious in the first three days of their illness. Those infected may begin showing symptoms quickly, and many will experience fever and/or chills, muscle aches, cough and sore throat, fatigue, and headaches. Children more often experience vomiting and diarrhea when they have the flu.

The flu virus spreads mainly through tiny droplets that people with flu make when they talk, cough or sneeze. DSHS advises those with symptoms of flu to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, especially those who might be at greater risk of serious flu illness. Those in high-risk groups with flu symptoms should contact a healthcare professional immediately as antiviral treatments are available but are most effective when started within 48 hours of symptoms beginning. Antiviral drugs can make the illness milder and may also prevent flu complications.

People with flu do not need to visit the emergency room if their symptoms remain mild. If symptoms improve overall and they remain fever free for 24 hours, they may return to normal activities.

To keep an eye on how respiratory viruses are spreading in Texas, visit the [Texas Respiratory Illness Interactive Dashboard](#).

For more flu prevention tips, visit texasflu.org. People can look up where to find a flu shot at [Vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov). You can also contact your local health department, healthcare professional, or pharmacy to learn more about how and when shots are available.

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact UnitedHealthcare Customer Service at 888-887-9003, 8 a.m.–6 p.m. CT, Monday–Friday.