



MASSACHUSETTS

FLU SEASON FACTS

For the 2021-2022 season

Influenza viruses circulate in the United States most commonly from late fall through early spring. Although most people recover from flu without serious complications, it can result in illness, hospitalization, and death. Last year saw a decrease in flu cases, most likely due to the COVID-19 vaccine and related safety measures, such as face masks and social distancing. As these precautions become less commonplace, it's critical to get an annual flu shot to bring about another healthy year. **Please encourage your patients to get the vaccine.** Widespread flu vaccination will help protect families and communities, and lessen the strain on our health care system during the pandemic.

CDC RECOMMENDATIONS

For the 2021-2022 flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends use of licensed, age-appropriate flu vaccines, administered via a needle, nasal spray, or jet injector.

Most members will have no out-of-pocket cost

We follow the CDC and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations for the 2021-2022 season. **Flu immunization is covered *without a cost* to most of our members.** We recommend that you always check member benefits and eligibility before performing services.

Recommended flu vaccines¹

The CDC recommends the following vaccines for the 2021-2022 flu season. You can click on the blue text for links to informational websites:

- [Standard dose flu shots](#)
- [High-dose shots](#) (for people 65 years and older)
- [Shots made with adjuvant](#) (for people 65 years and older)
- [Shots made with virus grown in cell culture](#) (non-egg based)
- Shots made using a vaccine production technology ([recombinant vaccine](#)) that does not require an egg-grown vaccine virus and does not use chicken eggs in the production process
- [Live attenuated influenza vaccine](#) (LAIV). A vaccine made with attenuated (weakened) live virus that is given by nasal spray (FluMist)
 - Nasal spray flu vaccine is approved for use in non-pregnant people 2-49 years of age. People who are pregnant and people with [certain medical conditions](#) should not receive the nasal spray flu vaccine.²

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/summary/summary-recommendations.htm>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccinations.htm#when>

BILLING AND REIMBURSEMENT

- Use the appropriate CPT, HCPCS, or revenue code to bill for seasonal flu vaccine ordered from a manufacturer or distributor.
- An invoice isn't required.
- Reimbursement is based on our fee schedule for vaccines.
- For contracted providers and vendors, if you have a specific code listed in your contract, be sure to bill only those codes on your fee schedule.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE FLU VACCINE

Getting both the COVID-19 vaccine and flu vaccine

We provide **separate reimbursement** for both the COVID-19 vaccine and flu vaccine (see below for the administration), even if a member receives both during the same office visit.

Pediatric

We provide **separate reimbursement** for the administration or injection of routine pediatric immunizations regardless of whether the immunization is part of an office visit.

Adult

- We do *not* provide **separate reimbursement** for the administration or injection of vaccines for adult preventive vaccines when administered as part of an office visit.
- We **do** reimburse administration or injection of immunizations given independent of an office visit.

Blue Cross does not reimburse you for vaccine supplied by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Immunization Program.

- Please use the **SL modifier** on your claim for tracking purposes.
- Using this modifier will not affect how your claim processes.

RECOMMENDED 2021-2022 FLU VACCINE

The CDC reviews the composition of flu vaccines in the United States annually and updates them to match circulating flu viruses. This year's flu vaccines protect against the four viruses that research suggests will be most common. The vaccine takes two weeks to become effective once administered.

Blue Cross covers all the CDC and ACIP recommended flu vaccines this season.

Patients who should consult their provider before obtaining the vaccine

Patients should talk with their healthcare provider before being vaccinated if they:

- Have a life-threatening allergy to eggs, or any other ingredient in the vaccine (may include gelatin, antibiotics, or other ingredients)
- Have had Guillain-Barre syndrome
- Are currently ill with a fever
- Are not feeling well

High-risk groups³

Some people are at a high risk of serious flu complications. Many of these populations are also at a high risk of serious COVID-19 complications.

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm>

Health and age factors known to increase risk of getting serious complications from flu:

- Asthma
- Blood disorders (such as sickle cell anemia)
- Chronic lung disease [such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cystic fibrosis]
- Endocrine disease (such as diabetes)
- Heart disease [such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease (CAD)]
- Kidney diseases
- Liver disorders
- Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
- Neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions
- Obesity with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- People who have had a stroke
- People younger than 19 years old on long-term aspirin or salicylate-containing materials
- Weakened immune system due to disease (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or some cancers such as leukemia) or medications (such as those receiving chemotherapy or radiation treatment for cancer, or a person with chronic conditions requiring chronic corticosteroids or other drugs that suppress the immune system)

Other people at high risk from the flu:

- Adults 65 years and older
- Children younger than two years old
 - Although all children younger than five years old are considered at high risk for serious flu complications, the highest risk is for those younger than two years old, with the highest hospitalization and death rates among infants younger than six months old
- People from certain racial and ethnic groups, including non-Hispanic Black persons, Hispanic or Latino persons, and American Indians or Alaska Native persons
- People who live in nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Those who are pregnant or are up to two weeks postpartum

MEMBER COST BY PLAN TYPE

- **HMO, PPO, POS, Access BlueSM**
None if provider is participating (unless flu vaccine is administered with other covered services — such as an office visit — that *are* subject to member out-of-pocket cost).
- **Federal Employee Program**
Refer to [Federal Employee Program Service Plan Brochures](#) and fepblue.org.
- **Medicare Advantage**
None.
- **Indemnity**
None, unless the member has a grandfathered plan design, in which case member may have some cost.
- **Additional notes**
Home health care providers won't be reimbursed for a separate nursing visit unless the member is having an authorized home health care service performed without member cost.

For **skilled nursing facilities** (SNF), reimbursement applies only when the member is receiving custodial services at your SNF and the SNF is the member's home at the time of service. If these services are performed as part of inpatient care, they will be covered under your facility's per diem rate. Remember: always check member benefits before performing services, and please submit all claims directly to us.

WHERE CAN MEMBERS GET A FLU VACCINE?

In Massachusetts, Blue Cross members can receive a flu vaccine at any of the locations below *as long as services are rendered by a participating provider*:

- Certified nurse-midwife's office
- Community health centers
- Doctor's office
- Limited services clinic
- Home health care provider in the member's home or at a flu clinic
- Hospital-based outpatient clinic or hospital outpatient department
- Nurse practitioner's office
- Pharmacy
 - For members over age three only
 - No prescription required
 - Pharmacists must be registered, licensed, and participate with Express Scripts (ESI)
- Physician assistant's office
- Primary care provider's office
- Public access clinic sponsored by cities and towns (some cities and towns offer clinics with no charge to the resident; others may request a member ID to bill Blue Cross)
- Skilled nursing facility when member is receiving outpatient custodial services, such as physical or occupational therapy
- Specialist physician's office
- Urgent care center

Outside of Massachusetts, members can go to any **Blue plan-participating** provider.

- Members can use our Find a Doctor & Estimate Costs tool (bluecrossma.com/findadoctor) or bcbs.com to locate a Blue Cross provider. Or, they can visit vaccines.gov/get-vaccinated/where.
- Only Medicare Advantage members can receive reimbursement for flu vaccines obtained from a *non-participating* provider.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Flu Resources section of our [MyBlue member website](#)
- The CDC site: cdc.gov/flu/index.htm
- [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#)