

TOUCHPOINT

PEDIATRICS, P.A.

2025 - 2026 Flu and Winter Vaccines:

Our annual flu vaccines have arrived!

We have the most up to date *preservative-free* flu vaccines. The optimal time to get your flu shots is September/October for the best coverage through the winter flu season. Our flu shot clinics will take place in our office and will be on selected Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Tuesday mornings during October, November and Saturdays from September through November, we will be having our drive through flu clinic in the parking lot. Patients and their family members with scheduled well visits will be able to get the flu shots at their visit. Please let our staff know ahead of time.

We will administer flu shots to family members, including grandparents, babysitters and to pregnant women who prefer to get the *preservative-free* option, which most clinics do not offer. Payment at time of scheduling your appointment will be required. If you are not our patient, payment must be made prior to receiving the flu vaccine. The cost this year is \$45.00.

Please contact our office at 973.665.0900 to schedule flu vaccines for your family while we have available doses and appointments.

Flu Vaccine Q&A:

Q: What about buying the FluMist online and giving it at home?

A: We will not add home FluMist to our official vaccine list in the medical chart. You may attach a document to the medical chart, but it will not be acceptable or documented as receiving their flu vaccine since we cannot attest if it was administered correctly.

Q: Should my child receive a flu vaccine this year?

A: The Center for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and our pediatricians do recommend that all people 6 months of age and older be vaccinated against the flu every fall. This advice is especially important for children at high risk for influenza complications, such as children below the age 5, and any child with a chronic medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes. It is also especially important for household contacts of newborn babies to be vaccinated, since these babies are too young to be vaccinated themselves. In New Jersey, all children attending daycare and nursery school are required to get flu shots. Please be aware of your center's deadlines.

Q: Why is the flu shot a trivalent instead of a quadravalent this year?

A: The 2024–2025 flu season in the United States transitioned to trivalent flu vaccines after the World Health Organization (WHO) and FDA recommended excluding the B/Yamagata influenza lineage. The B/Yamagata virus hasn't been detected in global surveillance since March 2020, making its inclusion in the vaccine unnecessary. Trivalent vaccines protect against three strains of flu: two influenza A strains and one influenza B strain. The B strain is based on the strain researchers predict will be the most widespread each year.

Q: What about Covid Shots?

A: We recommend all over 6 months old receive the newest Covid shots as per the CDC guidelines. Just like all vaccines, while it may not prevent illness, the Covid shot significantly reduces the chance of severe illness. Chatham is contracted with the Westfield Regional Health Department for all health services and offers shots for all ages (tel: 908.789.4040). Local pharmacies, like CVS/Minute Clinic offer shots for those 18 months and older, including the Covid shots. We are on a waiting list to obtain Covid

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shots for our younger patients.

Q: What about RSV shots?

A: The RSV shot is recommended for all pregnant women delivering through the winter months. Expectant families should discuss with and obtain this shot from their obstetricians. It gives good passive immunity to newborns through their most vulnerable weeks. If a mother has not had an RSV shot, they should ask the delivery hospital to administer it to the baby before discharge. Any infant who is going through their first winter is eligible for the infant version called Beyfortus RSV shots, not all insurance plans cover the cost, which is approximately \$600.00 per shot (plus administration fees), so parents will be required to sign an agreement to cover the cost if insurance does not. We will have Beyfortus RSV shots available starting in October.

Q: What if my child is allergic to eggs?

A: In the past, since the influenza vaccine is grown in eggs, it was believed that people with egg allergies had to be cautious when receiving the vaccine. However, extensive studies have shown that the flu vaccine is extremely safe to receive, even for people with severe egg allergies. Their risk of a significant reaction from the flu vaccine is no greater than that from any other vaccine. Therefore, it is recommended that even people with severe egg allergies receive the flu vaccine just like anyone else, without any special concerns or precautions.

Q: Is it possible to get the flu from the flu vaccine?

A: No. The side effects from the flu shot, if any, are generally mild soreness at the site of injection, and occasionally mild fever for a day or two. The flu shot is an inactive shot, so cannot cause the flu. However, it takes about 2 weeks for your body to respond to the shot with boosted immunity. This is why it is most effective to receive your shots before the flu virus is at high levels in the community.

Q: Does the flu vaccine contain the preservative thimerosal?

A: No, all the formulations of flu vaccines that we have in our office are thimerosal-free.

Q: Does my child need one dose or two doses of the flu vaccine this year?

A: Children 9 years of age or older will only need one dose to develop optimal immunity. Children under age 9 who have *not* already received at least two doses of flu vaccine in previous years will need two doses this year, at least four weeks apart. If you have questions about your child's specific needs, please contact our office.

Q: What about Tamiflu or Xofluza?

A: It is better to get the flu vaccine than to get the flu. If you do get the flu, and the flu test done in our office is positive, the doctor may discuss Tamiflu with you. Tamiflu is an antiviral medicine, not an antibiotic. It does not cure the flu, but if started within the first 48 hours of the flu, it may decrease the severity and duration of illness, as well as decrease contagiousness. It can also be given to close exposures of people with flu (other household members) to reduce the chance of illness. It is strongly recommended for those with very severe flu symptoms (such as patients sick enough to be hospitalized), as well as those with significant underlying medical conditions. However, there are possible adverse effects from Tamiflu and Xofluza such as GI distress, headaches, abdominal discomfort, and even hallucinations/delirium. If you are considering asking for Tamiflu, please discuss with one of our physicians. We will not prescribe Tamiflu without seeing a patient or having documentation of flu in a close family member.