

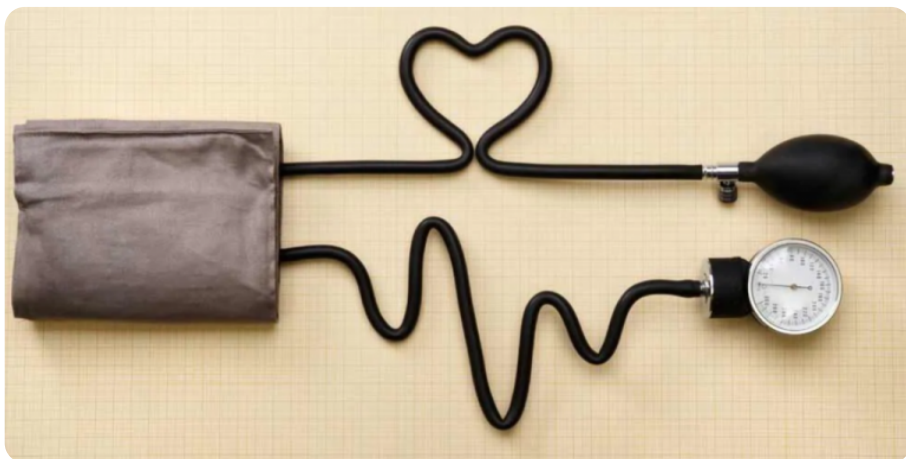


INFLUENZA LATEST NEWS

A New (and Welcome) Low

As COVID-19 cases soar, flu numbers plunge

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It's official. Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year for 2020 is pandemic. Also hitting the list as a common 2020 conversation starter is quarantine. While these two words pretty much sum up why it's so tough to find a



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Reduces Risk of
Hospitalizations in
Children, Death in
Adults**

“glass half full” angle for the year, there is some solace in the fact that one word is missing from the list: “twindemic.”

“Twindemic” – a word often set off in quotes since it’s not a legitimate word – first popped up sometime during late summer 2020, right before the perennial flu season kickoff. The neologism represented a creeping fear that the United States might simultaneously suffer a fall/winter surge in Covid-19 cases as well as a severe flu season, a.k.a. a “twindemic.”

However, as 2020 comes to a close and flu season enters its traditional peak period, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) delivers welcome news. “Nationwide during week 50, 1.6% of patient visits reported through ILINet [Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network] were due to ILI [Influenza-like Illness]. This percentage is below the national baseline of 2.6%.”¹

In fact, the CDC reports below norm influenza cases worldwide, a welcome stat that the federal agency suggests is linked to the pandemic. “The global decline in influenza virus circulation appears to be real and concurrent with the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated community mitigation measures.”²

Put another way, it seems that face masks, social distancing, incessant handwashing, stay-at-home orders, and all the additional measures to slow COVID-19 spread made a serious dent in influenza cases this year.

Giving credit where credit is due, Americans also stepped up with a healthy vaccination rate in 2020. The CDC says that as of December 11, more than 190 million flu vaccine doses had been distributed across the US, establishing this as the highest number of flu doses distributed in the US during a single influenza season.³

For any Americans in a physician's waiting room who put off their flu vaccine, it's not too late – even as everyone opens their 2021 calendar. As per the CDC, a flu vaccine can “still be beneficial as long as flu viruses are circulating.”⁴

So, because influenza is an unpredictable beast with a season that can last well into May, the “never too late” philosophy is a good call. Now combine that with a lingering fear that a late spring or early summer “twindemic” is possible. Suddenly a flu vaccine post-New Year's Day or pre-Valentine's Day sounds even better.



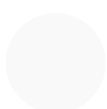
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