



UNOLS Recommends Vessel Operators and Scientists Get Flu Shots

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that nearly everyone get a flu shot. Per the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2020-2021.htm>):

Annual flu vaccination is [recommended](#) for everyone 6 months of age and older, [with rare exceptions](#), because it is an effective way to decrease flu illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing the overall burden of respiratory illnesses is important to protect vulnerable populations at risk for severe illness, the healthcare system, and other critical infrastructure. Thus, healthcare providers should use every opportunity during the influenza vaccination season to administer influenza vaccines to all eligible persons, including;

- *Essential workers*: Including healthcare personnel (including nursing home, long-term care facility, and pharmacy staff) and other [critical infrastructure](#) workforce
- *Persons at increased risk for [severe illness from COVID-19](#)*: Including adults aged 65 years and older, residents in a nursing home or long-term care facility, and persons of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions. Severe illness from COVID-19 has been observed to disproportionately affect members of certain [racial/ethnic minority groups](#)
- *Persons at increased risk for [serious influenza complications](#)*: Including infants and young children, children with neurologic conditions, pregnant women, adults aged 65 years and older, and other persons with certain underlying medical conditions

Vessel crews are *essential workers* as they are part of the Transportation Systems Sector that has been identified as part of the critical infrastructure by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). Accordingly, UNOLS recommends that vessel operators encourage and provide opportunities for ship crews and Marine Technicians to get their flu shots.

UNOLS also recommends that each science party member receive a flu vaccination prior to conducting research onboard Academic Research Fleet vessels. Although science party members are not *essential workers*, it is in the best interest of the research cruise to minimize the health risks as much as possible to avoid any unnecessary issues/delays, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.