

## Get your flu shot at the airport

By Harriet Baskas

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*The convenience of getting a flu shot during a layover may be a thing of the past soon: Business for one flu-shot provider was down 60 percent and fewer airports are contracting with health clinics.*

For the past few years, a time-crunched traveler could put his or her layover time to good use by rolling up a sleeve and getting a flu shot at clinics or kiosks at any of more than two dozen [U.S.](#) airports.

But this year it won't be so easy for health-conscious road warriors to get that flu shot on the fly. After a several-year spike in availability, the trend of offering flu shots at U.S. airports seems to be waning.

While there are several cities where the flu vaccine is available at clinics on airport property or right nearby, as the accompanying chart shows, this year there are less than a dozen U.S. cities where travelers will be able to get immunized against this year's strain of the flu inside an airport.

"The contracting process may have proved too onerous," said Kent Vanden Oever, of the AirProjects consulting firm, "Or it may be that the number of flu shot outlets available to people has exploded in the last couple of years. It seems that every grocery store, drug store, etc. offers them now and not as many people require the convenience of getting them at the airport."

At airports in Philadelphia, Charlotte, Miami and [Las Vegas](#), the on-site clinics operated by AeroClinic and AirportMD that once offered flu shots are no longer open. Harmony Pharmacy, which in past years offered flu shots at health centers at [JFK](#), SFO and Newark-Liberty airports, has shifted focus and now only sells health and beauty products at its airport locations.

And this year FLU\*Ease, a company that for the past five years has set up and staffed many in-airport flu shot kiosks, isn't even offering that service.

"Over the years, I've had kiosks at JFK, BOS, ORD, MDW, [STL](#), DEN, LAX, TPA, CVG and SFO," said FLU\*Ease owner Jeff Butler, "We provided in excess of 60,000 shots annually. But last year business was down over 60 percent, with no explainable reason."

It's not that getting a flu shot is no longer important for travelers. "When you travel, you're going to be exposed to many more people and potentially exposed to a wide variety of bugs that could cause infection" says Dr. Robert Wheeler, the medical director of On Call International, which provides medical and travel assistance for travelers, "So travelers do need to be concerned about flu this time of year."

This year, travelers seeking flu shots at an airport will find them at kiosks inside the Louisville and [San Diego](#) airports and at the Carehere Walk-in Clinic and Wellness Store at [Nashville International Airport](#). At Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the remaining (and original) AeroClinic is offering flu shots at both its atrium site and at several kiosks inside the airport. The clinics inside San Francisco International and Orlando International Airports are also offering flu shots, as are independent clinics located on airport property or right nearby [Los Angeles](#), Boston, JFK and Honolulu airports.

At [O'Hare International Airport](#), which seven years ago was the first airport to offer flu shot kiosks, the UIC O'Hare Urgent Care Center is once again offering flu shots in its clinic and at several temporary kiosks in the terminals. And while it takes ten to fourteen days for protection from a flu vaccine to kick in, clinic medical director John Zautcke says airport flu shot kiosks offer busy travelers the utmost in convenience. "There's virtually no wait and it takes less than five minutes. We've done almost 3,000 flu shots this year already and expect to do another 1,000."

Last week, Barbara Cohen of Bethesda, Md., and Donna Vobornik of Oak Park, Ill., were among the travelers who stopped to get their flu shots at one of the kiosks at O'Hare International Airport.

Cohen was heading back to Maryland after visiting her son at college in Chicago. "[When I'm](#) at the airport, I usually read or walk around," said Cohen, "I really meant to get a flu shot this weekend and there was the stand. This is perfect. It's as easy as it can get."

Vobornik was on her way home from visiting her daughter, who is attending college in Miami. "It's becoming an annual thing for me to get my flu shot at the airport," said Vobornik, "This is my third year. I travel a lot for my job as a lawyer and sit next to a lot of sick people on a lot of flights. I'll feel less worried now knowing that I have my shot."

<http://travel.usatoday.com/experts/baskas/story/2011-11-15/Get-your-flu-shot-at-the-airport/51221912/1?loc=interstitialskip>