



HEALTH ALERT

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Respiratory Illness and Guidance for

Flu, RSV and COVID-19 Vaccines

This Health Alert is intended to make all individuals, providers, staff and other caregivers aware of the latest recommendations from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) to follow the most recent immunization recommendations issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) for vaccines to prevent and limit the severity of infections of the flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 viruses. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) expects the upcoming U.S. 2025-2026 fall and winter respiratory disease season (defined as October through mid-May) will likely have a similar combined number of peak hospitalizations due to COVID-19, influenza, and RSV compared to last season. Each year, respiratory viruses are responsible for millions of illnesses and thousands of hospitalizations and deaths in the United States. The good news is there are actions you can take to help protect yourself and others from health risks caused by respiratory viruses. Now is the time to speak to your healthcare practitioner about receiving a vaccine.

The CDC notes that:

- Coadministration of vaccines is an acceptable practice.
- If vaccines are NOT administered the same day, there is no required interval between vaccines

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Who is at risk of complications or serious problems if infected by:

- **Flu**

Anyone can get flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to flu can happen at any age, but some people are at [higher risk](#) of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant people, and children younger than 5 years old.

- **COVID-19**

Although hospitalization rates are currently low, rates continue to grow after the late summer increase. Further increases **are expected as colder weather approaches**.

Older adults are at highest risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. More than 81% of COVID-19 deaths occur in people over age 65. The number of deaths among people over the age of 65 is 97 times higher than the number of deaths among people ages 18-29.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities of all ages are thought to be at higher risk of getting very sick or dying from COVID-19. Individuals with [certain medical conditions](#) are also at a greater risk of serious illness.

- **RSV**

RSV can cause illness in people of all ages but may be especially serious for infants and older adults. Infants and older adults with chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease, weakened immune systems, or who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, are at highest risk of serious illness and complications from RSV.

It causes 3.6 million to 6.5 million outpatient visits, 190,000 to 350,000 hospitalizations and 10,000 to 23,000 deaths annually.

Key Summary of Vaccination Information

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Influenza	• Vaccination of all persons aged 6 months and older who do not have contraindications is recommended. • Changes: Updated U.S. influenza vaccine composition for 2025-2026 ○ Trivalent flu vaccines are formulated to protect against three main groups of circulating seasonal influenza Type A and B viruses: an A(H1N1) virus, an A(H3N2) virus, and a B/Victoria lineage virus. ○ Adults 65+ should get a high-dose or Adjuvanted flu vaccines, Flu zone High-dose, Fluad adjuvanted or Flu Blok recombinant. ○ A regular dose age-appropriate vaccine should be offered if high dose or Adjuvanted vaccines are not available in any vaccine administration opportunity. ○ Persons with egg allergy: Should receive influenza vaccine, no additional safety measures required. ○ Most of projected influenza vaccine supply produced this influenza season will be thimerosal-free or thimerosal-reduced (i.e., preservative-free).
COVID-19	• Updated COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for everyone aged 6 months and older. • All adults 18 years and older should receive a COVID-19 vaccine. It is especially important to get a COVID-19 vaccine if you are:

	○ 65 years of age and older. ○ At increased risk for severe COVID-19 infection. ○ Have never received a COVID-19 vaccine. • All Children ages 6 – 23 months should be vaccinated against COVID-19 and use a risk-based approach for children and teens 2 – 18 years. • The AAFP recommends COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy during any trimester and including during lactation.
RSV	• The AAFP supports CDC guidance recommending a one-time RSV vaccine for adults age 75 and older, and for ages 50 – 74 at increased risk. • During September – January pregnant patients are advised to receive the RSV vaccine Abrysvo at 32 – 36 weeks. • Infants under 8 months without maternal protection should receive nirsevimab or clesrovimab.

Information on Vaccinations

- **Flu**

- The CDC recommends routine annual influenza vaccination of all persons 6 months of age and older who do not have contraindications.
- For most persons who need only 1 dose of influenza vaccine for the season, vaccination should ideally be offered during September or October. However, vaccination should continue after October and throughout the influenza season if influenza viruses are circulating, and unexpired vaccine is available.

- Adults age 65+ should get a high-dose or Adjuvanted flu vaccines, Flu zone High-dose, Fluvad adjuvanted or Flu Blok recombinant is recommended by the CDC.
- A regular dose age-appropriate vaccine should be offered if high dose or Adjuvanted vaccines are not available in any vaccine administration opportunity.
- The CDC has stated that everyone ages 6 months and older with an egg allergy should receive an annual flu vaccine. Any flu vaccine (egg based or non-egg based) that is otherwise appropriate for the recipient's age and health status can be used.
- All injected vaccines should be administered in settings in which personnel and equipment needed for rapid recognition and treatment of acute reactions to the vaccine are available.
- The FDA approved FluMist, the live attenuated influenza vaccine, for self- or caregiver administration (ages 2-17 with caregiver ≥18 years old), eligibility screening required.
- The FDA approved Flublok, the recombinant influenza vaccine, previously approved for ages ≥18 years, for ages ≥9 years.
- There are multiple types of flu vaccines available this season. Individuals should have a discussion with their healthcare provider as to which flu vaccine is best for them.
- Side effects are generally mild and go away on their own within a few days. Some side effects that may occur from a flu shot include soreness, redness, and/or swelling where the shot was given, headache (low grade), fever, nausea, muscle aches, and fatigue.
- **COVID-19**
 - COVID-19 vaccination has been proven safe and effective in significantly reducing severe outcomes of COVID-19 disease including hospitalization, death, and post viral syndromes.

- The updated (2025 – 2026) COVID-19 vaccines will target the JN.1 lineage, utilizing the LP.8.1 strain, which is a descendant of the Omicron variant.
- The FDA has approved monovalent formulations for use, tailored to provide stronger immunity against currently circulating strains.
- Everyone 6 months of age and older is recommended to receive updated (2025-2026) monovalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Universal vaccination for ages 6-23 months; Risk-based single-dose for 2-18 years (with access upon request for families seeking protection) (Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech).
- Individuals should have a discussion with their healthcare provider as to which vaccine is best for them.
- Side effects from the vaccines may include pain, swelling, and redness on the arm where the shot was given. Throughout your body you may have tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, nausea, and fever. Myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the lining outside the heart) have occurred in some people who have received mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. Myocarditis and pericarditis following mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have occurred most in males 12 years through 24 years of age.

- **RSV**

- AAFP recommends a single dose of RSV vaccine to protect all adults ages 75 and older and adults ages 50–74 who are at increased risk of severe RSV.
- RSV vaccines demonstrate moderate to high efficacy in preventing RSV-associated lower respiratory tract disease, aiming to reduce morbidity and mortality in older adults.

- For the 2025-26 RSV season, if your health care provider recommends RSV vaccination, you should get an RSV vaccine as soon as it is available in your community, before the number of cases of RSV start to increase, which is usually in the fall and winter.
- Individuals should have a discussion with their healthcare practitioner as which RSV vaccine is best for them.
- Side effects such as pain, redness, and swelling where the shot is given, fatigue, fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, and muscle or joint pain are possible after RSV vaccination. These side effects are usually mild. Serious reactions after vaccination are rare.
- The vaccines are not covered by all insurance; Medicare part D plans will cover or reimburse.

Additional education and resources are available through:

- [Stay Up to Date on Respiratory Virus Vaccines](#)
- **Children & teens:** [AAP’s “All About the AAP Recommended Immunization Schedule”](#) on [HealthyChildren.org](#).
- **Adults & older adults:** [AAFP Adults 19 and Older Immunization Schedule](#).
- **Pregnancy (COVID-19, Flu, RSV):** ACOG’s [ACOG Releases Updated Maternal Immunization Guidance for COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV](#), which recommends:
 - COVID-19 vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.
 - Inactivated/recombinant flu vaccine during any trimester.
 - Maternal RSV vaccine between 32–36 6/7 weeks of gestation, with coadministration permitted.
- **Ask your health care provider** about the best time to get your vaccines and any personal

health factors you should keep in mind.

- **Resources for Parents:** [AAP's "Vaccines Your Child Needs by Age 6"](#) and [AAP's "Vaccines for 'Tweens, Teens & Young Adults."](#)