



HEALTH ALERT

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October-12-2023

Vaccines for Respiratory Viruses

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 Center of Disease Control (CDC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) for vaccines to prevent and limit the severity of infections of the flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 viruses. Cases of COVID-19 and RSV are rising, and the flu season will be starting soon, it is the time to speak to your healthcare practitioner about receiving a vaccine. This is the first fall and winter virus season where vaccines are available for these three viruses responsible for most hospitalizations.

The CDC notes that

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

Who is at risk for complications or serious problem 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 have risen steadily over the past several weeks. 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 age 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 for getting very sick or dying from COVID-19. Individuals with certain medical conditions are also at a greater risk of serious illness for a list of these conditions go to [People with Certain Medical Conditions | CDC](#).

- **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 60,000-120,000 hospitalizations and 6,000 to 10,000 deaths annually in adults 65 years and older.

Key Summary of Vaccination Information

Influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination of all persons aged 6 months and older who do not have contraindications is recommended. • Changes: Updated U.S. influenza vaccine composition for 2023-2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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
COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for everyone aged 6 months and older • The vaccines are covered by insurance. Uninsured and underinsured children and adults have access to vaccines through Vaccine for Children (VFC) or Bridge programs. • Everyone ages 5 years and older recommended for a single 2023-2024 dose. • People ages 12 years and older have the option of receiving either the updated (2023---2024 Formula) mRNA (Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech) or updated (2023---2024 Formula) Novavax vaccine.
RSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSV can cause serious illness in older adults. Certain underlying medical conditions and advanced age are associated with increased risk of severe RSV. • Adults 60+ may receive an RSV vaccine based on shared clinical decision-making with a healthcare provider.

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 as long as 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, FluAd 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 age 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 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.
- 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 (2023-2024) mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are monovalent XBB.1.5 vaccines and have been proven effective against the current circulating COVID strains in the XBB family including EG.5.1, FL.1.5.1 and BA.2.86.
- Everyone 6 months of age and older is recommended to receive updated (2023-2024) monovalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.
- Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine, Adjuvanted (2023-2024 Formula) is authorized for use in individuals 12 years of age and older as follows:
 - Individuals previously vaccinated with any COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Individuals not previously vaccinated with any COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Immunocompromised individuals.
- Individuals should use this website, [Vaccines.gov - Find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you](#) for the most up to date information regarding available vaccine providers.
- Uninsured adults should obtain vaccine from providers in the Bridge Access program and uninsured children should obtain vaccine from providers in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.
- 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.
- **RSV**
 - Adults 60 years of age and older may receive a single dose of RSV vaccine.
 - 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 2023-24 RSV season, if you are 60 years of age or older and your health care provider recommends RSV vaccination after discussion with you, 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:

- Preparing for the Upcoming Respiratory Virus Season: Recommendations for Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV Vaccines for Older Adults. PowerPoint Presentation (cdc.gov). 09/19/2023
- Key Facts About Influenza (Flu) | CDC. 10/24/2022
- Seasonal Flu Vaccines | CDC 08/25/2023
- People with Certain Medical Conditions | CDC. 05/11/2023
- Healthcare Providers: RSV Vaccination for Adults 60 Years of Age and Over | CDC. 08/30/2023
- RSV Vaccine Information Statement | CDC. 07/24/2023
- [Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 Vaccination | CDC](#) . 10/05/2023