



Risk Less. Do More. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Pan Respiratory Virus (PRV) Public Education Campaign

Risk Less. Do More., the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Pan Respiratory Virus (PRV) Public Education Campaign, seeks to inform key audiences about influenza (flu), COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines. *Risk Less. Do More.* aims to:

- Encourage more people to get flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines during the 2024–2025 season, reducing the negative effects of respiratory viruses on individuals, families, communities, and the nation;
- Increase public confidence in flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines;
- Help people understand more about vaccines; and
- Ensure that everyone is aware of where and when they can get vaccinated, especially within vulnerable communities.

The campaign, which launched during National Immunization Awareness Month in August 2024, reaches people who are at higher risk for serious illness, including adults ages 65 and older, residents of long-term care facilities (LTCF) and their caregivers, pregnant people, and those living in rural areas where they may have fewer health resources. It will also reach Black and Hispanic people in the United States who are at higher risk of severe illness from flu, COVID-19, and RSV.

The campaign has secured partnerships with more than 50 national, state, and local organizations to execute a mix of activities ranging from virtual and in-person events, social and digital dissemination or campaign materials, and more. Additionally, the campaign has held more than 60 events in key priority markets, along with 60 pop-up vaccination clinics.

Read the campaign [press release](#) or go to RiskLessDoMore.hhs.gov to learn more.

The following talking points provide evidence-based background and messaging to help expert spokespeople prepare for media interviews about flu, COVID-19, and RSV viruses and vaccines.

Key Messages for Respiratory Viruses and Vaccines

- **Flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines help people *risk less severe illness and do more of what they enjoy.***
 - Flu, COVID-19, and RSV continue to take a heavy toll across the United States.
 - In 2023, more than 400,000 people in the United States were hospitalized for flu, 900,000 were hospitalized for COVID-19, and more than 200,000 were hospitalized for RSV.
 - In 2023, about 90% of adults hospitalized for COVID-19 were not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine.
 - People who skipped their flu shot were twice as likely to need medical help for the flu.
 - Vaccines cut your risk of being hospitalized for flu or COVID-19 by about half.
 - Vaccines bring your risks down, so you can keep showing up.

- **This season’s flu and COVID-19 vaccines and the RSV vaccine are available and provide the best protection against severe disease, especially for certain people who are at risk for hospitalization.**
 - The risk of serious illness remains highest in certain people, including people who are not up to date on their vaccines, adults ages 65 and older, residents of long-term care facilities, pregnant people, and those living in rural areas.
 - Some racial and ethnic groups, including people who are Black and Hispanic, are also at higher risk.
- **Infections from viruses like flu, COVID-19, and RSV can surge in the fall and winter.**
 - People are indoors with less ventilation more often in the fall and winter, making it easier for viruses to pass from person to person.
 - Some viruses, such as the virus that causes COVID-19, survive longer and spread faster in colder temperatures, and cold, dry air can make it harder for the body to fight off illness.
- **Everyone 6 months and older should get updated flu and COVID-19 vaccines.**
 - Adults ages 65 and older and people with certain conditions that compromise their immune systems should get an additional dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine six months after their initial dose to strengthen and extend protection against severe illness.
 - Flu and COVID-19 can make you really sick. But vaccines lower your risk of severe disease, and any side effects are usually mild and temporary.
- **If you care for an older adult, or if you help them access medical services or make health decisions, you play an important role in promoting the lifesaving benefits of flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines.**
 - Most residents in long-term care facilities live with a health issue that raises their risk of severe flu, COVID-19, or RSV.
 - Talk with your family and friends about getting their flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines.
- **Visit [cdc.gov/RiskLessDoMore](https://www.cdc.gov/RiskLessDoMore) to learn more about flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines; talk to your doctor about which 2024–2025 vaccines are right for you; or go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to get started today.**

Prevention is the best option.

- Infections in the respiratory system—including the nose, sinuses, and lungs—are usually caused by viruses.
- Flu, COVID-19, and RSV are respiratory illnesses that can become serious.
- Prevention is the best way to keep from getting very sick from flu, COVID-19, and RSV. There are many ways to avoid respiratory illnesses this fall and winter. The more of these you do, the better:
 - Get vaccinated.
 - Vaccines are your best protection against severe disease from flu, COVID-19, and RSV.
 - Vaccines boost the body’s natural defenses against germs that can make you sick.
 - Open windows and use fans to improve ventilation in your home. Gather outdoors whenever possible to reduce the risk of exposure to respiratory viruses.
 - Wear a mask in public places, especially in crowds.
 - Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid contact with people who are sick, and if you get infected yourself, stay at home and away from others, especially those who may be at higher risk for severe disease.
- The ideal time to get vaccinated varies by vaccine.
 - Vaccines keep millions of people from getting the flu every year and can keep symptoms milder for people who get the flu after getting a vaccine. That’s why it’s important to get vaccinated as early as possible in the fall and winter flu season.
 - Everyone ages 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine.
 - Just because you had a flu shot last year doesn’t mean you are still protected now. Flu viruses can change year to year and immunity from both flu vaccines and from having had the flu decreases

over time, so it's important to boost your protection with a flu shot as early as possible every flu season.

- An updated COVID-19 vaccine is available now, so get it now.
 - Everyone ages 6 months and older should get a 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Adults ages 65 and older and people with certain conditions that compromise their immune systems should get an additional dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine six months after their initial dose to strengthen and extend protection against severe illness.
- Getting this season's COVID-19 vaccine is important because protection from the COVID-19 vaccine decreases over time. COVID-19 vaccines are updated to give you the best protection from the viruses that are in your community.
- If you've recently had COVID-19, you can wait up to 3 months to get a COVID-19 vaccine. The risk of getting COVID-19 again is lower in the 3 months after you've had it.
 - An RSV vaccine can be taken at any time, but getting this vaccine in late summer or early fall helps protect you from RSV when it's most common in fall or winter.
 - Everyone ages 75 and older, or 60 and older with health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, obesity, and diabetes, should get one dose of an RSV vaccine if they have not been vaccinated for RSV before.
 - RSV vaccines are given in one dose. If you've already had an RSV vaccine, you don't need another one. To protect their baby after birth, pregnant people should get an RSV vaccine between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy if that period falls between September 1 and January 31.
 - People can get more than one respiratory virus vaccine in the same appointment.
 - When you get your annual flu vaccine, you can get this season's COVID-19 vaccine.
 - You can also get an RSV vaccine if you are eligible and have never been vaccinated against RSV.
 - People who get flu, COVID-19, or RSV after getting a vaccine are much less likely than those who did not get a vaccine to need to see a doctor or go to the hospital.

Older adults have the highest risk.

- Most deaths from flu, COVID-19, and RSV are in people older than age 65, and the risk grows with age.
 - Adults ages 65 and older are 10 times as likely to die from flu, COVID-19, or RSV as people under age 50.
- As people grow older, their immune systems do not work as well, and older adults are more likely to have health conditions that make them more likely to get sick.
 - As many as eight out of 10 flu deaths are of adults ages 65 or older.
 - Last year, 75,000 people died from COVID-19, most of them ages 65 and older.
 - RSV is a common virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. But it can be severe, and even deadly, in older people. Each year, about 100,000 – 160,000 older adults in the United States are put in the hospital due to RSV infection, and about 6,000 -10,000 die.
- Every adult should get this season's flu vaccine.
 - High-dose flu vaccines that cause a stronger immune reaction are available for extra protection for adults ages 65 and older.
- Every adult should get this season's COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Adults ages 65 and older and people with certain conditions that compromise their immune systems should get an additional dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine six months after their initial dose to strengthen and extend protection against severe illness.
- All adults ages 75 and older, and those 60 and older with certain health conditions or who live in a nursing home, should get an RSV vaccine.
- If you help care for a family member or friend age 60 or older, make sure they know about their risk for getting very sick with flu, COVID-19, and RSV and that vaccines can help protect them.

Vaccines help protect pregnant people and newborns.

- Flu, COVID-19, and RSV can be very harmful to newborns.
 - Children younger than 5 years old, and especially those younger than 6 months, are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications.
 - About 20,000 children under age 5 in the United States are put in the hospital due to the flu on average each year.
 - Studies show that infants under 6 months of age are hospitalized for COVID-19 at about the same rate as adults ages 65–74 years old.
 - More infants are hospitalized in the United States because of RSV than for any other reason. Each year, about 58,000–80,000 children younger than 5 years old are put in the hospital due to RSV infection, with infants being at greatest risk.
- When a pregnant person gets flu and COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy, both the pregnant person and their baby have protection against serious illness.
 - Getting vaccinated for flu and COVID-19 during pregnancy can protect the pregnant person and can protect their baby during the first 6 months.
- An RSV vaccine during pregnancy helps protect the baby from severe RSV during the first 6 months of life.*
 - **Note to spokespeople: Pregnant people who cannot or choose not to get an RSV vaccine during pregnancy can still protect their babies with an antibody immunization given to the baby shortly after birth.*
- Pregnant people should ask their doctor or midwife about flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines.

Vaccines help protect people who live in rural areas.

- People who live in rural areas of the United States are higher at risk for severe illness from flu, COVID-19, and RSV.
- Less than half of adults living in rural areas got a flu shot last respiratory virus season and less than 1 in 5 got an updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- In 2023, about 90% of adults hospitalized for COVID-19 were not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine.
- Limited access to health care in some rural areas makes prevention even more important.

Vaccines help protect people who are Black and Hispanic.

- Some racial and ethnic groups, including Black and Hispanic people in the United States, are at higher risk of severe illness from flu, COVID-19, and RSV.
- Black and Hispanic communities bore some of the heaviest impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Black adults were more likely than White and Hispanic adults to be hospitalized for flu, COVID-19, or RSV at the peak of the 2023–2024 respiratory virus season.
- Hispanic adults were more likely than non-Hispanic White adults to be hospitalized for flu by the end of the 2023–2024 respiratory virus season.

Vaccines are tested and monitored.

- Vaccines offer the best protection against severe disease from flu, COVID-19, and RSV.
- Vaccines go through extensive testing—both in the lab and with volunteers—before they are available to the public.
- COVID-19 vaccines have undergone the most thorough safety analysis in U.S. history.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ensures companies that make vaccines do it with care so vaccines are safe and work the way they should.

- Vaccine safety is carefully monitored. People who think they might have a health issue related to a vaccine can tell the CDC and the FDA through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.
- Like other medications, vaccines have some level of risk, but serious side effects are rare.
- Some people have no side effects from flu, COVID-19, or RSV vaccines. Any side effects are usually mild and go away on their own in a few days.
 - The most common side effects for respiratory vaccines are soreness or red skin where you got the shot, tiredness, fever, body aches, and headache.
 - Severe side effects or allergic reactions are rare. They only occur in five of every 1 million doses given.
- There is no evidence that vaccines cause or worsen conditions like cancer or infertility.
- Vaccines help keep symptoms mild to keep people out of the hospital if they get infected.

Learn More.

- Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to get started. Visit [cdc.gov/RiskLessDoMore](https://www.cdc.gov/RiskLessDoMore) or talk with your doctor for more information on respiratory illnesses.

Additional Topics

Misinformation can have dangerous consequences.

- Health misinformation is information that is false, inaccurate, or misleading according to the best available evidence at the time.
- False and misleading information about vaccines causes people to make decisions that could be dangerous to their health.
- Misinformation spreads through communities, within families, and between friends. Friends and family are often trying to help when they share misinformation.
- Remember that accurate information connected to health and medicine involves rigorous research and complex science, and advice can change as more research is done.
- Talking to friends and family about the impact of misinformation can help slow the spread by helping them to think twice about what they hear, read, and share.
- Misinformation can sometimes be spread on purpose to trick people into believing something to make money or to gain power for those spreading the misinformation. This is called disinformation.
- Misinformation and disinformation are hard to detect because they often contain some truth. Stories can be misleading, quotes can be taken out of context, and data can be selectively used to support false claims.
- If friends or family share wrong information, listen to why they believe it, show you understand, and guide them to good sources that don't make money or gain power from the information.
- If you receive health information that seems strange, call the CDC at 800-CDC-INFO, check the CDC website, or contact your state or local health department.
- You can also ask a doctor you trust, search online for a trustworthy source, and check “About us” to see who is behind the original message. If you're still unsure, don't share it.

Treatments are available for respiratory viruses.

- Seek health care right away if you believe you may have a respiratory virus (if you feel sick or tested positive for one) or if you have risk factors for severe illness.

- If you have flu or COVID-19, treatment may be an option to make your symptoms less severe and shorten the time you are sick. Treatment needs to be started within a few days of when your symptoms begin.
- Talk with your doctor about how antiviral treatment can help reduce your chance of being hospitalized or dying from respiratory viruses like COVID-19 and flu.
- There is no treatment for RSV, but you can manage symptoms with over-the-counter medications.
- Seek emergency care if you are having difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing worsening symptoms.

Free COVID-19 tests are available at [COVIDTests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov).*

- COVID-19 testing can help you know whether you have COVID-19 so you can decide what to do next, like getting treatment to reduce your risk of severe illness and taking steps to lower your chances of spreading the virus to others.
- COVID-19 tests will detect current COVID-19 variants and can be used through the end of the year.
- U.S. households are eligible to receive 4 free COVID-19 test kits.
- Go to [COVIDTests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov) to order them today.
 - **Note to spokespeople: confirm if the free test kits are still available prior to mentioning this resource.*

If you think you have a respiratory virus, take care of yourself and others.

- If you have respiratory virus symptoms, stay home and away from others (including people you live with who are not sick).
- These symptoms can include fever, chills, fatigue, cough, runny nose, and headache, among others.
- You can go back to your normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, both are true:
 - Your symptoms are getting better overall, and
 - You have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication).
- When you go back to your normal activities, take extra precautions over the next 5 days.
- These precautions include taking additional steps for better indoor ventilation, hygiene, masks, physical distancing, and/or testing when you will be around other people indoors.
- It is especially important to protect people at risk of severe illness from respiratory viruses.
- If you develop a fever or you start to feel worse after you have gone back to normal activities, stay home and away from others again until, for at least 24 hours, both are true: your symptoms are improving overall, and you have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication). Then, take extra precautions for the next 5 days.