

# What You Should Know About Flu, COVID-19, and RSV Vaccines

Each year, millions of people get sick, and thousands need hospital care or die from respiratory infections caused by viruses. Vaccines help prevent these outcomes or lessen their severity. You can lower your risk of getting sick with a respiratory infection by staying up to date with influenza (flu), COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) as needed.

## Are you at higher risk for severe illness?

You are considered high risk for a severe case of flu or COVID-19 if you:

- Are 65 years or older
- Are pregnant
- Have certain medical conditions such as obesity, asthma, diabetes, or heart disease
- Have a weakened immune system.

You are considered high risk for severe RSV if you:

- Are 75 years or older, or
- Are age 60–74 and live in a long-term care facility or have certain medical conditions such as:
  - Diabetes
  - Heart disease
  - Obesity
  - Kidney disease

## Vaccines help you risk less and do more.

Vaccinating against flu and COVID-19 can help keep you from getting sick. Even if you do get sick after getting vaccinated, your symptoms will likely be mild. Vaccines are also a safer, more dependable way to build immunity than catching a virus to build immunity. If you haven't gotten them yet, you need a 2024–2025

flu vaccine and a 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccine. The formulas for both flu and COVID-19 vaccines change so they can work better against the virus strains circulating in your community right now.

## I'm sick with flu or COVID-19. Now what?

Flu and COVID-19 can cause symptoms like fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headaches, and a lack of energy. If you catch flu or COVID-19, talk to your doctor to learn if you can take an antiviral drug to help you recover faster, especially if you're at high risk for severe illness. Stay home and away from others until you feel better. While you're sick, monitor your symptoms and get medical care if you have:

- Trouble breathing
- Pressure or pain in your chest
- Extreme sleepiness
- Confusion or dizziness

## RSV

RSV is another respiratory virus with symptoms similar to flu and COVID-19. RSV can affect infants' and older adults' ability to breathe. You are at higher risk for severe RSV disease if you are:

- 75 years of age or older
- 60 or older and living in a long-term care facility
- 60 or older and have certain medical conditions, such as heart, lung, or kidney disease, obesity, diabetes, or asthma

Infants are also at higher risk for severe RSV disease, which hospitalizes more infants in the United States than any other condition. Pregnant people can pass protection to their babies for their first 6 months of life by getting an RSV vaccine during pregnancy. A doctor can help you decide if an RSV vaccine is right for you.



Learn more at [cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses](https://cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses)

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DO MORE.**  
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A campaign to increase awareness and uptake of vaccines for flu, COVID-19, and RSV in at-risk populations.

# Addressing Common Concerns on Flu, COVID-19, and RSV Vaccines

It's normal for patients to have questions and concerns about vaccines. Use this fact sheet to help address common concerns you might hear from your patients about influenza (flu), COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines.

## Helpful Tips:

- Your patients may have inaccurate information about vaccines or feel strongly about them. Listen to their questions and comments with empathy. Validating their emotions helps build connection and trust.
- Ask open-ended questions to explore how your patients feel. This encourages two-way conversation and helps you understand their concerns.
- Give your patients a strong recommendation to get vaccinated. Use the talking points below to help your patients understand why you are recommending vaccines and to give them the facts they need to find their own reasons to get vaccinated.
- Remind patients of the vaccine benefits: Vaccines help them risk less and do more.

COMMON CONCERNS	TALKING POINTS
Flu vaccines cause the flu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ You can't get the flu from a flu vaccine because flu vaccines either use a dead form of the virus or no virus at all.</li><li>■ Some people who are vaccinated still get the flu. Even if you get the flu, being vaccinated helps your symptoms stay milder.</li></ul>
I got a flu vaccine last year. Why do I need one again?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Flu viruses change from year to year, so the flu vaccine is updated annually to help target the current strains of flu.</li><li>■ You should get a flu vaccine every year so that you're protected against the latest flu viruses spreading in your community.</li></ul>
I never get the flu, so why should I get the flu vaccine?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Some types of flu viruses spread more easily than others, and the most common flu viruses infecting people change each year. Getting vaccinated makes sure you're more protected from new or changing virus strains.</li><li>■ If you do get the flu, there's no way to predict how bad your symptoms might be. But if you're vaccinated, your risk of getting severely ill is cut nearly in half.</li></ul>
I already got a COVID-19 vaccine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The COVID-19 virus has changed a lot. The 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccines were updated to target the newest variants.</li><li>■ If you're up to date with the vaccines, you're more protected from severe illness even if you get COVID-19.</li></ul>

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COMMON CONCERNS	TALKING POINTS
<p><b>COVID-19 vaccines cause long-term side effects.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most people have either mild side effects or no side effects at all after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.</li> <li>■ Like with any medicine, rare but serious reactions to vaccines can happen. Data show that in every one million people who get a vaccine, five or fewer have a severe allergic reaction, depending on which vaccine they get.</li> <li>■ Some people have been concerned about heart inflammation after a COVID-19 vaccine, but the risk of heart inflammation is higher after getting COVID-19 than after getting the vaccine.</li> <li>■ The benefits of the vaccines outweigh the risks of COVID-19's long-term health effects, or Long COVID, which is much more common than serious vaccine side effects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I thought COVID-19 was over! Why should I keep getting COVID-19 vaccines?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ COVID-19 is still around and still making people seriously ill, especially if you're 65 years old or older; pregnant; if you have a health condition such as heart disease, obesity, or asthma; or if you have a weakened immune system. COVID-19 vaccines help protect you from COVID-19's worst outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RSV vaccines are too new and haven't been studied enough.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ RSV vaccines were proven to work well to protect people from getting really sick from RSV in clinical trials. The most common side effects are a sore arm, lack of energy, and headache, and those symptoms don't last long. Severe allergic reactions are rare.</li> <li>■ RSV can be very dangerous for older adults. It can make you have trouble breathing or develop an infection deep in your lungs. The RSV vaccine helps protect you from serious symptoms.</li> <li>■ The benefits of getting vaccinated outweigh the risks of severe RSV.</li> <li>■ Infants are also at higher risk for severe RSV disease. Pregnant people can pass protection to their babies for their first 6 months by getting an RSV vaccine during pregnancy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Can I get more than one of these vaccines at the same time?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You can get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time. If you are eligible for an RSV vaccine, then you can get it at the same time you get either or both flu and COVID-19 vaccines.</li> <li>■ If you choose to get a flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccine at different times, then you don't need to wait a certain amount of time before getting another vaccine.</li> <li>■ You may have more side effects if you get more than one of these vaccines at the same time, but symptoms will likely be mild and should not last long. Some of the most common side effects are arm pain or swelling, headache, and fatigue.</li> </ul>



Find more resources at [RiskLessDoMore.hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/risklessdo-more)

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