

# The DPH Bulletin – Respiratory viruses edition

From the Delaware Division of Public Health

November 2024

## Protect against respiratory diseases by getting three critical vaccinations

The Division of Public Health (DPH) follows the vaccination recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vaccination can prevent severe disease, hospitalization, and death, including from the following three diseases:

### Influenza (“the flu”)

The flu vaccine is needed every year. The CDC recommends that individuals 6 months of age and older get the [2024-25 flu vaccine](#). Seniors aged 65+ need a higher dose flu vaccine.

Flu vaccinations are recommended for those who live or work with infants under 6 months of age and who live or work in settings with many people, such as multi-family households, apartments, schools, offices, and correctional facilities. Vaccination is important for health care workers, especially those who work in long-term care facilities or who live with or care for people at highest risk.

### Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

The CDC recommends that everyone aged 6 months and older get the [2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine](#), regardless of whether you received a vaccine in the past, have had COVID-19, and have long COVID. That is because vaccine protection decreases over time. There are [additional specifications](#) for children and those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised. In addition, the CDC recommends that adults aged 65 and older receive a [second dose of the 2024-2025 vaccine](#) six months after their first dose.

For COVID-19 risk factors, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/risk-factors/>.

The COVID-19 vaccine is needed every year.

### Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

The CDC recommends one dose of [RSV vaccine](#) for adults aged 75 and older and adults aged 60 to 74 who are at increased risk for severe RSV. The CDC recommends all babies be protected from severe RSV by one of two immunization options: a maternal RSV vaccine given to the mother during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy or an RSV antibody given to your baby. Talk to your provider for details and specific recommendations.

The RSV vaccine is not yearly.

## How to prevent respiratory diseases

- Get and keep up with your recommended vaccinations.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough or sneeze into your inner elbow.



- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- If sick with flu-like illness, stay home until you are fever free without using fever-reducing medication for 24 hours. A fever is a measured temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater. If symptoms worsen, call your doctor.

## Find flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available for all Delawareans, regardless of insurance status. Uninsured individuals and those on Medicaid or Medicare may receive flu and COVID-19 vaccines at DPH clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers. Those with insurance can get flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines at pharmacies or participating medical providers. Vaccination sites are listed at [de.gov/getmyvaccine](https://de.gov/getmyvaccine).

Health care providers give RSV vaccines. Tell the vaccinator if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an allergic reaction after a previous dose, or has any severe, life-threatening allergies.
- Has a chronic medical condition such as heart or lung disease, a weakened immune system, or certain other underlying medical conditions.
- Lives in a nursing home or long-term care facility.



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## Risk factors for respiratory diseases

- Increasing age, especially those over 60.
- Having an underlying medical condition such as obesity, diabetes, asthma or chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorder, immune disorder, and/or another genetic, neurologic, or metabolic condition.
- Having a rare medical condition.
- Being from a racial and ethnic minority group.
- Having a physical, cognitive, developmental, or learning disability.
- Having a weakened immune system, such as when undergoing cancer treatment.

## How respiratory diseases spread

Respiratory diseases spread when droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze contact your eyes, nose, or mouth. They also spread by touching a surface that has the virus on it, such as a doorknob, counter, or table, and then touching your face before washing your hands.

## The U.S. government approves vaccines

U.S. vaccines are reviewed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. Vaccine composition is updated as needed to best match the viruses that research indicates will be most common.



Division of Public Health Director Steven Blessing received his 2024-2025 flu vaccination on October 30 at the James Williams State Service Center in Dover, Del. Krystal Peterson, Supervisor of Nurses for the DPH Mobile Health Units, administered the vaccine. The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu shot every year. Photo by Sean Dooley.



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## Seniors 65+ need higher-dose flu vaccine

For adults aged 65 years and older, the CDC preferentially recommends one of three higher dose or adjuvanted flu vaccines: [Fluzone High-Dose influenza vaccine](#), [Flublok recombinant influenza vaccine](#), and [Fluad adjuvanted influenza vaccine](#). If these are not available, people aged 65 and older should get a standard-dose unadjuvanted inactivated flu vaccine instead.

For more information about higher dose flu shots recommended for adults aged 65 years and older, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm>.

### For more information

#### Flu

Visit DPH at [flu.delaware.gov](http://flu.delaware.gov) or call 1-800-282-8672. Or, visit the CDC at [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu).

[Click here](#) for the difference between cold and flu.

#### COVID-19

Visit DPH at [coronavirus.delaware.gov/vaccine](http://coronavirus.delaware.gov/vaccine) or call 1-800-282-8672. Or visit the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

#### RSV

Talk to your health care provider or call DPH at 1-800-282-8672.