

What You Need To Know About COVID-19, Flu and RSV

Respiratory viruses such as COVID-19, influenza (flu) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are more common in fall and winter.

COVID-19, flu and RSV are common illnesses, each caused by a different virus. All three spread mainly by droplets produced when someone who is sick coughs, sneezes or talks. People can become sick if these droplets or infected mucus or saliva enter their eyes, nose or mouth.

Older adults, young children and people with certain underlying medical conditions are at the highest risk of getting sick or having severe illness from these viruses. Here is what you need to know to keep you and your family safe.



Symptoms

The symptoms of COVID-19, flu and RSV are similar.

- With **COVID-19** and **flu**, symptoms may include fever, chills, cough, sneezing, runny nose, congestion, fatigue, sore throat, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, muscle pain, body aches, headaches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Change in or loss of taste or smell may also occur but is more likely with COVID-19.
- **RSV** usually causes mild cold-like symptoms such as cough, sneezing, runny nose, congestion, chills, a low fever and loss of appetite. In young infants, the only symptoms may be irritability, decreased activity, and difficulty feeding or breathing.



Prevention

How can I protect myself, my children and others from COVID-19, flu and RSV?

Get vaccinated! **COVID-19** and **flu** vaccines reduce your chance of becoming sick, being hospitalized and dying. Everyone age 6 months and older should:

- Get an updated COVID-19 vaccine, which became available in September 2023 and is updated for the 2023-2024 season, even if they have received prior COVID-19 shots or had COVID-19 before.
- Get the flu shot every year.

There are new **RSV** vaccines available for adults age 60 and older and people who are pregnant. Talk to your health care provider about whether RSV vaccination is right for you.

There is also a new injectable medicine to prevent RSV in young children that is recommended for all infants younger than 8 months old during their first RSV season. Preventive medicines are also available for some older infants and young children at high risk of severe RSV, such as those with heart and lung conditions and infants born premature.

What else can I do to protect myself and others from getting sick?

Practice these key prevention measures:

- Wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor spaces and crowded places, and when you are sick and around others. Consider wearing a high-quality mask, such as an N95, a KN95 or a KF94.
- When sick, stay home — do not go to work, and keep children who are sick home from day care and school — and avoid being around others in and outside the home.
 - Visit paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/COVID19 to learn about paid leave if you or your child has COVID-19. Call 855-491-2667 for assistance.
- Wash your and your children's hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; and clean frequently touched surfaces (such as door and sink handles), especially when you are sick.



Getting Care

When and how should I get tested?

If you have symptoms, get tested for **COVID-19** and **flu** right away so you can start treatment if eligible. Many doctors' offices, clinics, urgent care centers and pharmacies offer COVID-19 and flu testing — do not go to an emergency room only to get tested. To find a COVID-19 testing site, visit nyc.gov/covidtest. You can also use at-home COVID-19 tests.

RSV testing usually does not impact the care you or your child will receive. Because of this, many providers may offer testing only to young infants, people age 65 and older, and others at increased risk of severe illness.

What treatment is available?

COVID-19 and **flu** treatment such as oral antiviral pills reduce the risk of complications, hospitalization and death.

- If you test positive for COVID-19 or flu, contact your provider about treatment right away, as it works better the sooner you start.
- People at high risk of complications from flu should talk to their provider without waiting for a flu test result.

There is no specific treatment for **RSV**.

Regardless of which virus you or your child has, talk to your provider about over-the-counter medicine to reduce fever and other symptoms. It is also important to stay hydrated and make sure children who are sick stay hydrated.

When should I seek medical care?

Talk to your provider about whether you or your child should seek care in person and about treatment and symptom relief. Call your provider if your child has:

- Signs of dehydration, such as dry mouth or little urine (less-wet diapers)

- A fever that lasts more than three days or stays above 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius), or any fever if they are younger than 3 months old
- Unusual fussiness, poor feeding or sleepiness

If you are unable to reach your provider, go to an urgent care center or emergency room.

For adults or children with difficulty breathing (in young children, this may appear as rapid breathing, grunting, nostrils flaring or using neck muscles to breathe), a pale or blue color around the lips or mouth, confusion, severe dehydration, or other concerning symptoms, call **911** or go to a nearby hospital.

Do not go to the hospital if you or your child has no or only mild or moderate symptoms, or just for testing. Most people recover from COVID-19, flu and RSV on their own or with medicine they can take at home.

Where can I get care?

If you or your child does not have a provider:

- Visit a nearby urgent care center or clinic.
- Check with your health plan to see if they have a telehealth hotline.
- Contact NYC Health + Hospitals Virtual ExpressCare at expresscare.nyc or 631-EXP-Care (631-397-2273). Care is available 24/7 in over 200 languages, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
- Find a COVID-19 Test to Treat site by visiting aspr.hhs.gov/testtotreat or calling 800-232-0233.
- Find a COVID-19 or flu vaccination site by visiting vaccinefinder.nyc.gov.