



## Respiratory Viruses

# Take Steps to Help You Stay Healthy During the Holidays

November 9, 2023, 2:00 PM EDT

CDC is posting updates on respiratory viruses every week; for the latest information, please visit [CDC Respiratory Virus Updates](#).

## What to know about respiratory viruses during the holidays



- Many different viruses spread more during fall and winter, including those that cause flu, COVID-19, and RSV illness.
- Large gatherings, crowded travel, and more time indoors can mean more viruses spreading around the holidays.
- This is the first year that there are vaccines to protect against all three of these viruses. These vaccines have been shown to prevent severe disease and can be lifesaving. They can also help ensure you are able to enjoy valuable time with loved ones.
- There also are other healthy habits you can practice to stay healthy.
- If you do get sick, there are tests and treatments to help get you feel better sooner.

## It all starts with you! Here's an action plan you can take to help you stay healthy during the holidays

### Get vaccinated.

- Many viruses spread more during the holiday season, so it is important to get [all recommended vaccines](#), including flu, COVID-19 and RSV, as soon as possible. This will give you the best protection against these respiratory diseases,

including while traveling and gathering with family and friends. These vaccines will also make your illness less severe if you do get sick.

- Everyone ages 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine and updated COVID-19 vaccination this fall.
- CDC recommends an RSV immunization for some groups at higher risk for severe RSV illness.
  - **Adults ages 60 and older:** talk to your healthcare provider to see if RSV vaccination is right for you.
  - **Parents:** CDC recommends using one of these two tools to protect your baby – an RSV vaccine given during weeks 32-36 of pregnancy *or* an RSV preventive antibody given to infants. The RSV preventive antibody is also recommended for some older babies at higher risk for severe RSV disease.
- **Vaccination is the most important step** you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones. Vaccines help the body learn how to defend itself from disease without the danger of an infection.
- You may be able to get [flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines during the same visit](#). Talk with a healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have questions about these vaccines and how or when you should get them.

### Take action to stop respiratory viruses from spoiling holiday cheer.

- If you are sick, stay home to avoid putting others at risk. You should also avoid others in the household to lessen their risk. If you have severe or worsening symptoms, call your healthcare provider.
- [Cover coughs and sneezes](#) when around others to help protect them.
- Stay away from others who are sick, if possible. Usually, there are more droplets and particles that can make you sick closer to the person who is infected.
- [Masks](#) can help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. Wearing a high-quality [mask while you travel](#), for example, can help protect you and others. This might be especially important if you are at higher risk of developing serious complications from these illnesses.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread easily this way.
- [Handwashing](#) often with soap removes most germs, including respiratory viruses, from your hands. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can kill many germs.
- Viral particles in the air spread between people more easily indoors than outdoors. Any way you can [improve air quality](#), such as opening windows or using air purifiers, can help reduce the amount of virus you are exposed to.

### If you do feel sick, there are tests and treatments.

- If you have signs or symptoms of a respiratory virus, like a cough, runny nose, or fever, [tests](#) can help figure out which illness you have.
- [Free at-home COVID-19 tests](#) [↗](#) are available. A healthcare provider may also test you for flu, COVID-19, and RSV.
- In addition to diagnostic testing, you can work with a healthcare provider to figure out the next steps you should take. Remember: antibiotics do not work on viruses. CDC has more information about [antibiotic do's and don'ts](#).
- Prescription antiviral treatments for [COVID-19](#) and [flu](#) are available.
  - These treatments can lessen your symptoms and reduce the risk of hospitalization. They work best if they are started soon after you become infected.
  - If you are at higher risk of severe illness, and develop symptoms including cough, fever and sore throat, talk to your healthcare provider sooner rather than later. CDC recommends people at higher risk be treated with antiviral medications.
- Be sure to store all medications up and away, and out of reach and sight of young children.

The holiday season can be stressful with all the hustle and bustle, responsibilities, and obligations. Good eating, sleeping, and exercise habits can help keep you healthy also. Be sure to make time to [take care of yourself](#)!

Last Reviewed: November 9, 2023