



Respiratory Diseases and Older Adults

Are you at risk?

Older adults are at higher risk of hospitalization and death from respiratory diseases such as COVID-19, flu and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

When respiratory diseases are circulating in your area, healthy habits can help you and your family stay safe:

- Stay up to date on vaccines.
- Improve ventilation in your work and home spaces.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wear a mask or respirator when using indoor public transportation, when in indoor public areas and if you feel ill.

It is important that older adults, and people in the same household or who work with older adults get vaccinated against respiratory diseases.

COVID-19 vaccine

Adults are recommended to receive one dose of the updated 2023 2024 vaccine. Some adults who are immunocompromised may need additional doses.

RSV vaccine

Two vaccines (Arexvy by GSK and Abrysvo by Pfizer) are recommended for adults ages 60 and older.

Flu vaccine

Higher dose or adjuvanted yearly vaccines are recommended over standard dose vaccines for people over 65. Adjuvanted vaccines have an extra ingredient in them to make them more effective for older adults.

When should I get vaccinated?

Reach out to your health care provider to ask what vaccinations you may be due for. It is best to get vaccinated before disease activity begins to rise in your community.

COVID-19 spreads year round. Get your updated vaccine as soon as it is available in your area.

Flu and RSV can spread year round but spread the most in the fall and winter months. Get your vaccinations before the fall season. If you miss this time frame, you should still get your vaccinations.

How do I get vaccinated?

Contact your healthcare provider to schedule a vaccine appointment. For many people, you can receive multiple vaccines at the same appointment.

You can also use [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find COVID-19 and flu vaccines near you.

Most insurance companies and Apple Health cover the cost of these vaccinations.

What should I do if I feel sick?

Contact your health care provider or caretaker to let them know you feel ill.

If you feel ill or have been in close contact with someone that tests positive for an illness, stay home and wear a mask around others or in common spaces.

At-home COVID-19 tests may be available for you to order for free. Visit [COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov) to check if free at-home tests are available for order.

Family, household and caretakers

People that frequently spend time with older adults, such as family members, household members, and [health care staff](#) (English) should stay up to date on their respiratory disease vaccinations. Vaccines are one of the best ways to prevent spreading respiratory illnesses to those you love or are responsible for caring for.

Know the emergency warning signs

Adults should go to the ER if they have:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Chest pain.
- Confusion.
- Worsening fever and cough, especially with pink or bloody mucus.



[FluFreeWA.org](https://www.FluFreeWA.org)

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