

Older Adults Should Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19, Flu, and RSV

Respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19, flu (influenza), and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), spread through coughing, sneezing, talking, and breathing and are more common in fall and winter. If you are an older adult, get vaccinated against COVID-19, flu, and RSV to make sure you are protected.

What vaccines do I need to stay safe?

You should get a 2025-2026 **COVID-19** vaccine and a 2025-2026 **flu** vaccine. These vaccines have been updated to protect against strains of the viruses expected to spread this season. Getting an updated vaccine strengthens your protection, which decreases over time.

You only need to get vaccinated against RSV once. If you have never been vaccinated against **RSV**, you should get an RSV vaccine if:

- You are age 75 and older.
- You are age 50 to 74 and at high risk for RSV due to certain medical conditions, including chronic heart or lung disease or residence in a long-term care facility.

Talk to your provider if you have questions about whether you should get vaccinated. You should also ask your provider about whether you may need additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine, especially if you are immunocompromised.

Why is it important for older adults to get vaccinated?

Older adults are at increased risk of getting very sick, being hospitalized, and dying from COVID-19, flu, and RSV. Certain underlying medical conditions, such as chronic kidney, heart, or lung disease and diabetes, further increase the risk of severe illness from these viruses.

From January 2020 through July 2025, about 70% to 85% of flu deaths, 50% to 70% of flu hospitalizations, and more than 75% of COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. occurred among people age 65 and older.

Which brand of COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines should I get?

You can choose which **COVID-19** vaccine brand to get, regardless of which vaccines you received previously. You can also choose which **RSV** vaccine brand to get.

People age 65 and older should get a high-dose, adjuvanted or recombinant **flu** vaccine because these vaccines work better in older adults than the standard flu vaccine.

Are there side effects from the COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines?

For most people, side effects are mild and go away within a few days. Common side effects include soreness in the arm that was vaccinated, headache, body aches, and tiredness. You cannot get COVID-19, flu, or RSV from the vaccines.

Where can I get vaccinated?

Ask your provider or pharmacy if they offer vaccination. You can also visit nyc.gov/health/map to find a vaccination site; select “Vaccines” and then select the vaccine you want from the “Services” menu.

Will my health insurance cover vaccination?

Medicare and most other insurance plans cover vaccinations for older adults without a copayment or other cost-sharing. Make sure you go to a provider that accepts your insurance.

What if I do not have insurance?

Free COVID-19 and flu vaccines are available for people without insurance or with limited insurance coverage. To find a site that offers free vaccines, visit nyc.gov/health/map and select “Vaccines.” Under “Services,” select the vaccine you want, and then in the “Payment” drop-down, select the option “No Cost for Uninsured.”

Can I get the COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines at the same time?

Yes, you can get all three vaccines at the same time.

Can I still get COVID-19, flu, or RSV if I have been vaccinated?

Yes. While the vaccines lower your risk of infection, you can still become infected, especially as more time passes since you were vaccinated. However, if you become infected, having been vaccinated helps reduce symptoms and the risk of complications, hospitalization, and death. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 reduces your risk of long COVID (symptoms that last for months or longer after COVID-19 infection).

If you have symptoms, such as cough, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, fever, or body aches, get tested. Many pharmacies and clinics offer testing for COVID-19, flu, and RSV at the same time. Medication is available for older adults with COVID-19 or flu, and treatment works better the sooner you begin. If you do not have a provider, contact NYC Health + Hospitals ExpressCare at expresscare.nyc or 631-EXP-Care (631-397-2273).

In addition to getting vaccinated, what other steps can I take to reduce my risk of getting sick?

- Consider wearing a well-fitting mask in crowded indoor spaces. A high-quality mask, such as an N95, a KN95, or a KF94, offers better protection.
- Avoid being around people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Improve ventilation by opening windows or using a portable air cleaner.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus, nyc.gov/flu, and nyc.gov/rsv.