

# Healthy Living 'VIRUS SEASON'

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## COVID-19

Vaccines are covered by Medicare part B and most health insurance plans. Free vaccines are available at local health departments and pharmacies participating in the CDC's Bridge Access Program.

## FLU

Vaccines are covered by Medicare part B, Medicaid, and most health plans. If you are 65+ it is recommended that you receive the higher dose vaccine.

## 2023-2024 WINTER SEASON

This is the first fall and winter virus season where vaccines are available for the three viruses responsible for most hospitalizations – COVID-19, Flu, and RSV.

The 2023–2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines target the XBB lineage of the Omicron variant and could

restore protection against severe COVID-19 that may have decreased over time. Beginning September 25, 2023 the federal government will send 4 free COVID-19 tests per household if you call 1-800-232-0233. If you do get sick, antiviral treatments are available from your doctor to stop the virus from multiplying further in your body.

## RSV

If over 60, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccine is covered by Medicare part D and is required coverage by health plans in the next plan year.

Every year scientists look to the flu season in the southern hemisphere to predict the strains we will be exposed to. This year the U.S. 2023-2024 flu vaccines have a similar vaccine virus composition as the 2023 Southern Hemisphere flu vaccines. They contain the strains A (H1N1, H3n2) and B (Victoria lineage, Yamagata lineage). This year in the Southern Hemisphere, people who had received a flu vaccine were half as likely to be hospitalized with flu compared to people who had not been vaccinated.



*"If you are worried about visiting possible high risk loved ones over the holidays, try quarantining a week before your visit. If you can, work from home, avoid shopping busy store hours or order ahead for pick up. Most importantly get vaccinated and stay home if you're feeling ill. This will allow you peace of mind as you visit indoors this winter season."*

Every year there are 60,000–160,000 hospitalizations and 6,000–10,000 deaths due to RSV among adults ages 65+. Fortunately, an RSV vaccine is now available for protection. Research shows that one dose of the new RSV vaccine provides protection against RSV disease in adults ages 60+ for at least two winter seasons, when RSV normally circulates.

## REFERENCES

01

CDC Respiratory Virus Updates  
<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/whats-new/index.html>

02

CDC Recommends Updated COVID-19 Vaccine for Fall/Winter Virus Season. September 12, 2023.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/p0912-COVID-19-Vaccine.html>

03

RSV Vaccination for Older Adults 60 Years of Age and Over  
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/rsv/public/older-adults.html>

04

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