

Respiratory Virus Guidance

What to know

CDC's Respiratory Virus Guidance provides practical recommendations and information to help people lower health risks posed by a range of common respiratory viral illnesses, including COVID-19, flu, and RSV.

Overview

Each year, respiratory viruses are responsible for millions of illnesses and thousands of hospitalizations and deaths in the United States. In addition to the virus that causes COVID-19, there are many other types of respiratory viruses, including flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The good news is there are actions you can take to help protect yourself and others from health risks caused by respiratory viruses.

Prevention strategies

Core prevention strategies



CDC recommends that all people use core prevention strategies. These are important steps you can take to protect yourself and others:

- Stay up to date with [immunizations](#)
- Practice good [hygiene](#) (practices that improve cleanliness)
- Take [steps for cleaner air](#)
- When you may have a respiratory virus:
 - Use [precautions to prevent spread](#)
 - Seek health care promptly for testing and/or treatment if you have [risk factors for severe illness](#); [treatment](#) may help lower your risk of severe illness

CDC offers separate, specific guidance for healthcare settings ([COVID-19](#), [flu](#), and [general infection prevention and control](#)). Federal civil rights laws may require reasonable modifications or reasonable accommodations in various circumstances. Nothing in this guidance is intended to detract from or supersede those laws.

Additional prevention strategies



Additional prevention strategies you can choose to further protect yourself and others include:

- [Masks](#)
- [Physical distancing](#)
- [Tests](#)

Key times for prevention

All of the prevention strategies described in this guidance can be helpful to reduce risk. They are especially helpful when:

- Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of [illness in your community](#).
- You or the people around you were recently exposed to a respiratory virus, are sick, or are recovering.
- You or the people around you have [risk factors for severe illness](#).
 - Many factors can make it more likely for someone to become very sick from a respiratory virus. In addition to this guidance, there are several specific considerations for people with certain [risk factors for severe illness \(young children, older adults, people with weakened immune systems, people who are pregnant, and people with disabilities\)](#).
- You may not be aware of the things that can make others more vulnerable to serious illness. Using the core prevention strategies will provide a degree of protection regardless. If you are unsure about the health condition or risk status of those around you, the most protective option is choosing to use additional prevention strategies, like masking, physical distancing, and testing.

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