INFLUENZA, COVID-19, AND RSV TALKING POINTS FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Respiratory infections like flu, COVID-19, and RSV are common during the fall and winter and can put long-term care residents at risk for serious illness.

• Respiratory viruses can affect anyone, and those at higher risk for severe illness and even death include older adults, people with certain chronic conditions, and people living in long-term care facilities.
• Flu causes an estimated 50,000 deaths, 700,000 hospitalizations and 40 million illnesses in the United States each year.
• RSV causes an estimated 160,000 hospitalizations and 10,000 deaths in adults 65 years and older.
• Older adults, especially those 65 years and older, continue to be at higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes, including hospitalizations and deaths.

Flu: Everyone 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine ideally during September or October of each year.

• Getting the flu vaccine after October can still provide protection during the peak of flu season – it’s not too late!
• Getting the flu vaccine every year has been proven safe and effective in preventing serious illness and death in children and adults. We are stronger when we are all protected.
• CDC preferentially recommends high dose, recombinant or adjuvanted flu vaccines over standard flu vaccines for adults 65 years and older.

COVID-19: Everyone 6 months and older should get the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine.

• Updated COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for everyone 6 months and older.
• If you’re 65 years or older, it’s recommended you get an additional dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine if it’s been at least 4 months since your last dose, or at least 2 months if you are also immunocompromised. As people get older, the risk of getting very sick and dying from respiratory viruses increases. Another vaccine dose boosts your immune system and keeps you protected from serious illness.
• Everyone 6 months of age and older with moderate or severe immunocompromise may receive additional updated doses (talk to your healthcare provider for more information).
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- Vaccination remains the best protection against COVID-19-related hospitalization and death. Vaccination can also reduce the chances of suffering from long COVID.
- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and hundreds of millions of people have safely received a COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S.

RSV: Residents and staff 60 years and older at highest risk for severe RSV should discuss with their clinical provider whether an RSV vaccine is right for them.

- Adults who may benefit most from an RSV vaccine include:
  - Older adults
  - Adults living in nursing homes or long-term care facilities
  - Adults with chronic heart or lung disease, such as asthma
  - Adults with weakened immune systems (e.g., HIV, or having cancer treatments)
  - Adults with certain other underlying medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, sickle cell disease)

For more information about RSV, check out our RSV FAQs.

The RSV vaccine is also recommended for pregnant people at 32 through 36 weeks of pregnancy during September through January to prevent RSV infections in infants.

- Most infants will likely only need protection from either the prenatal RSV vaccine or infant immunization (monoclonal antibody products), but not both.
- Pregnant people can receive the RSV vaccine on the same day as other vaccines recommended during pregnancy, including Tdap, flu and COVID-19.
- These immunizations pass on protective antibodies to the baby.
- Pregnant people are encouraged to talk to their healthcare provider or midwife to learn more.

Staying up to date with immunizations is a simple action that long-term care staff, residents, and their families can take to protect each other from serious illness.

- It’s not too late to get the flu, RSV, or your first dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccines if you didn’t receive one this past fall or winter. To learn more, talk with your doctor or schedule your vaccine appointment at MyTurn.ca.gov.
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- It is safe and convenient to get the flu vaccine at the same time as other vaccines, including updated COVID-19 vaccines and the RSV vaccine for older adults. Older adults or those with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for complications.
- Flu, RSV, and COVID-19 vaccination will help lower the burden on the health care system by decreasing serious illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- For staff, staying up to date with immunizations like flu and COVID-19 means fewer sick visits to the doctor, less work absences, and staying healthy to care for your residents.
- Keep your immune system up to date! Just like our phones and computers need to be updated to avoid viruses, our immune systems need updating, too!
- If you are unable to get vaccinated at your facility, call your doctor or pharmacy, or schedule your flu and COVID-19 vaccines today at myturn.ca.gov.

If you work in a health care setting, immunizing against COVID-19 and flu is especially important.

- Flu and COVID-19 vaccination is important for health care workers and others who live with or take care of vulnerable people to prevent spreading flu and COVID-19 to them.
- Caregivers in long-term care facilities are in daily close contact with residents who are more vulnerable to serious flu and COVID-19 illness and death.
- **Staff members:** Consult with your team and review [standing orders](https://myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov/) to determine vaccination assessment and administration at resident intake.
- Need proof of having received your vaccines? Request a copy of your vaccine record from the California Digital Vaccine Record portal at [https://myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov/](https://myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov/).