

6 TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR PRACTICE AND YOUR PATIENTS FOR THE FALL AND WINTER VIRUS SEASON



Fall and winter virus season is here. Every year, flu, COVID-19, and RSV cause hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations. These tips and resources can help make sure your practice is ready to help patients stay protected this fall and winter season.

1 Know what is anticipated this fall and winter virus season

CDC expects a similar number of hospitalizations this season as last year nationally, but likely more than pre-pandemic years. Even a moderate season of flu, COVID-19, and RSV circulating at the same time could place more significant strain on our healthcare system than a severe season of just flu and RSV alone.

Resources:

[2023-2024 Respiratory Disease Season Outlook](#)

2 Understand what tools are available to protect patients against respiratory viruses

While we don't know exactly what's in store for this fall and winter season, we do know it's critical that our patients take advantage of safe and effective immunizations, proven treatments, testing, and everyday precautions to help protect themselves and their families against the worst effects of flu, COVID-19, and RSV.

Resources:

[Respiratory Virus Prevention Tools](#)

3 Know the latest clinical guidance and recommendations for each virus and each patient

Make sure you're aware of the latest clinical guidance for flu, COVID-19, and RSV for different populations, including patients who have risk factors for severe respiratory illness. CDC's [clinician resource hub](#) provides information on vaccines for flu, COVID-19, and RSV. Web pages are regularly updated to reflect the most current guidance and recommendations for clinicians.

Immunization against flu, COVID-19, and RSV (for people eligible for RSV vaccine) remains the most effective protection to help reduce the risk of hospitalizations, long-term health impacts, and death. Flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines may be co-administered, but if a patient prefers to space them out, there is no minimum wait period between the vaccines.

Resources:

[Clinical Guidance for Flu \(Vaccinations, Testing & Treatment\)](#)

[Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 \(Vaccinations, Testing & Treatment\)](#)

[Clinical Guidance for RSV \(Vaccinations, Testing & Treatment\)](#)

4 **Be prepared to talk to your patients about flu, COVID-19, and RSV immunizations**

With so many things competing for our attention, your patients need help finding the information they need to protect themselves and their family. Healthcare providers are the most trusted source of health information for their patients. You are in the best position to answer your patients' questions and ensure they receive accurate and actionable information. A clear and strong clinical recommendation is a critical factor in whether your patients get the vaccines they need. Your advice about staying up to date on vaccines and where to find trustworthy health information will help your patients keep themselves and their families safe from respiratory diseases this season.

Resources:

Fall and Winter Virus Season Patient Conversation Guide [TO COME]

[Building Confidence with COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

[How to Talk to Your Patients About Flu](#)

5 **Prepare your staff**

Educating your staff on the new and updated flu, COVID-19, and RSV immunizations will help prepare your practice for the fall and winter virus season and build trust between you and your patients. CDC regularly produces educational materials, including videos and webinars to provide you and your staff with timely and actionable information on disease activity, new clinical guidance, and immunization recommendations. Encourage your staff to receive recommended vaccines to protect themselves and your patients, and enable them to be ambassadors to help build and reinforce patients' vaccine confidence and trust.

Resources:

[Prepare Your Patients for the Fall and Winter Virus Season](#)

6 **Reach out to your patients about steps they can take to protect against fall and winter viruses**

Patient portals are recognized as a promising mechanism to support greater patient engagement and overall communication between patient and provider. These platforms have shown promise in many ways for improving health outcomes, and portal messaging reminders have proven to increase vaccination rates. Leverage your platform to share scheduling reminders and other important patient materials as soon as possible.

Resources:

Patient Reminder Language [TO COME]

In-Office Patient Poster [TO COME]

[Flu, COVID-19, and RSV Print Materials for Patients](#)

