

Health Advisory

Urgent CDC Recommendations on Immunizations and Therapeutics Given Increased Respiratory Disease Activity December 27, 2023

SUMMARY POINTS

- Clinicians should offer RSV, influenza, and COVID-19 immunizations to all eligible children and adults now as all three viruses show increased activity, leading to increased hospitalizations.
- Vaccinating pregnant women against respiratory viruses helps to protect infants.
- RSV is surging so clinicians should immunize eligible infants with nirsevimab now, rather than reserving doses for later in the season.
- An increase in MIS-C cases in children has been reported.
- Pneumonia cases in children are consistent with previous seasons.
- Clinicians should test and treat with antivirals for influenza and COVID-19 when clinically indicated.

On December 14, 2023, the CDC released an [alert](#) on increasing respiratory disease activity along with low immunization rates. The report is summarized below:

- CDC is tracking increased [respiratory disease activity](#) in the United.
 - In the past 4 weeks, hospitalizations among all age groups increased for all three viruses.
 - [Pediatric emergency department visits for pneumonia due to multiple etiologies](#) have increased since September in children but remain consistent with prior fall and winter seasons.
 - 14 children have [died in the US of influenza](#) so far this season.
 - COVID-19 is currently the #1 cause of respiratory viral hospitalizations in US adults.
- An increase in multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) following SARS-CoV-2 infection has been reported in the US.
 - CDC received 30 reports of MIS-C with illness onset occurring from August 6 to November 9, 2023.
 - A new [CSTE/CDC MIS-C case definition](#) went into effect in January 2023 and [updated MIS-C treatment guidelines](#) were released in July 2023.
- Vaccination rates are **suboptimal** for this respiratory viral season:
 - Influenza: [Vaccination coverage for the seasonal 2023-2024 influenza vaccine](#) is low in all age groups compared with the same period of the 2022–2023 season.
 - 35.9 % of children 6 months- 17 years have received the flu vaccine. 36.1 % of adults ≥ 18 years, 58.6 % of ≥ 65 years, and 33.6 % of pregnant people.
 - Covid-19: : [Vaccination coverage for the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine](#) remains low.
 - 7.7% in children 6 months–17 years (including 2.8% in children 6 months–4 years), 17.2% in adults ≥18 years (including 36% in adults ≥65 years), and 9.6% in pregnant persons.
 - RSV: 15.9% of U.S. adults aged ≥60 years reported [receiving an RSV vaccine](#).

Recommendations for clinicians:

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Immunization against influenza, COVID-19, and RSV reduces the risk of severe disease, including pneumonia, hospitalization, and death.

- **Vaccination of pregnant persons against RSV (Pfizer Abrysvo), influenza and COVID-19 helps to protect infants.** The shortage of nirsevimab, the monoclonal anti-RSV antibody approved for infants is ongoing, making maternal RSV vaccination at 32-26 weeks gestation of paramount importance. Infants whose mothers receive RSV vaccine will not need to receive nirsevimab in most cases.
- **Use nirsevimab doses now.** Because RSV activity is surging across all continental U.S. regions, providers should use available nirsevimab doses expeditiously rather than reserving nirsevimab doses for infants born later in the season.
- **Vaccinate everyone 6 months and older with a [2023–2024 seasonal influenza vaccine](#) now.** Some children ages 6 months–8 years need two doses spaced 4 weeks apart. Adults ages 65 years and older should receive high-dose, adjuvanted, or recombinant influenza vaccine, if available.
- **Everyone 6 months and older should receive at least one dose of an [updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine](#).** More than one dose may be needed for children 6 months through 4 years, immunocompromised patients, and unvaccinated persons 12 years and older who choose to receive the Novavax vaccine.
- **Adults 60 years and older may receive one dose of [RSV vaccine](#) using shared clinical decision-making.** Both Pfizer Abrisvo and GSK Arexvy are approved for use in adults 60 and older. Older adults at highest risk of severe disease due to RSV include those with cardiopulmonary disease and those living in long-term care facilities.
- **Test and treat for influenza and COVID-19.** Both [influenza antiviral medications](#) and [COVID-19 antiviral medications](#) are most effective in reducing the risk of complications when treatment is started as early as possible after symptom onset.
- Provider recommendation remains a powerful and proven way of increasing immunization rates.
 - Table 2 below provides immunization talking points for busy clinicians. Additional tools can be found at CDC’s [Healthcare Provider Toolkit: Preparing Your Patients for the Fall and Winter Virus Season](#).

Table 2. At-A-Glance: Vaccination Conversation Guide for Healthcare Providers

What patients may say	What providers can do	Tools for providers
“I didn’t know vaccination was recommended for me.”	Make a strong recommendation, like “You are due for your flu and COVID-19 vaccines today. I’ve gotten these vaccines myself and recommend them for you, too.”	Conversation Guide for Healthcare Providers
“It’s not top of mind/I keep forgetting.”	Send a reminder message to your patients now via your patient portal or text message to remind them about the importance of getting vaccinated now.	Script for patient portal reminder message in English and Spanish (download)
“I’m worried about vaccine safety.”	Give your patients accurate and up-to-date information about vaccine benefits and safety.	Conversation Guide for Healthcare Providers
“I’m not sure about getting vaccinated.”	Use motivational interviewing. Start with questions like “I hear you. If it’s okay with you, I would like to spend a few minutes talking more about fall and winter respiratory vaccines.”	Conversation Guide for Healthcare Providers

<p>“I’m worried about getting three vaccines at once.”</p>	<p>Discuss the facts on coadministration and the most important thing---getting all recommended vaccines.</p>	<p>What to Know About Getting Flu, COVID-19, and RSV Vaccines at the Same Time</p>
<p>“My child is healthy, so they don’t need vaccines.”</p>	<p>Let families know that while children with some health conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick, over half of the children under age 2 years hospitalized for COVID-19 and then admitted to the intensive care unit were otherwise healthy.</p>	<p>Conversation Guide for Healthcare Providers</p>