



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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## NEWS RELEASE

Office of the County Administrator, Public Affairs and Communications  
1 Harrison Street SE, P.O. Box 7000, Leesburg, VA 20177-7000  
703-777-0113 • Fax 703-771-5841

For Immediate Release    Media Contacts: Glen Barbour, Public Affairs and Communications Officer, 703-771-5086,  
December 14, 2022    Kristin Nickerson, NVERS, [Kristin.Nickerson@NVERS.org](mailto:Kristin.Nickerson@NVERS.org)

### **Northern Virginians Urged to Prevent Flu, COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Viruses as Hospitalizations Surge**

Northern Virginia's hospitals are experiencing severe capacity shortages due to the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the seasonal flu, COVID-19 and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). Just as communities across the country have experienced, local emergency rooms continue to be inundated with sick patients, leading to longer wait times. This trend is expected to persist throughout the winter season, adding further strain to local care sites and health care workers.

The members of the Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS) are asking residents, particularly vulnerable populations such as young children and older adults, to continue to practice health safety and, if medical attention is needed, seek it from the most appropriate provider.

#### **If Sick, Seek the Appropriate level of Medical Care**

"We want to ensure all Northern Virginians are informed on seeking the right care at the right time at the right place," said NVERS Executive Director Kristin Nickerson. "For example, seeking care from your primary care provider, a community clinic or an urgent care may be less time consuming and less costly than going straight to the emergency room."

Northern Virginia public health officials encourage everyone to take precautions to avoid getting sick, and, if sick, to [seek the appropriate level of care](#) to avoid overwhelming hospitals and to ensure everyone can access the care they need.

#### **Take Steps to Protect Yourself and Others**

"COVID mitigation strategies taken over the past few years were also helpful at reducing infections from other common respiratory viruses. These viruses are now able to spread more easily," said Loudoun County Health Director Dr. David Goodfriend. "We recommend taking all precautions to prevent illness, starting with vaccines for the flu and COVID-19 — including all boosters available — and incorporating steps like hand-washing, covering coughs and sneezes, staying home and keeping children out of school when they are sick, and other mitigation strategies."

Residents are urged to take these protective actions to prevent illness and avoid spreading illness to others:

- Get a flu vaccine as soon as possible. Everyone 6 months and older, including pregnant women, should get a flu vaccine every season with rare exceptions. Many pharmacies, doctor's offices, community health clinics and local health departments offer vaccines. Find a location near you to get a flu vaccine at [vaccinate.virginia.gov](http://vaccinate.virginia.gov).

- Get vaccinated against COVID-19 if you have not done so already. Get boosted if you have been vaccinated and it has been at least two months since your last vaccine dose. Updated bivalent booster doses are available for vaccinated individuals 6 months and older. Health officials advise parents to discuss this option with their child's health care provider. Visit [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov) to find a COVID-19 vaccine provider.
- Because there is no vaccine to protect against RSV or many of the other common winter viruses, it is important to take these simple and effective prevention steps:
  - Wash your hands regularly.
  - Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Avoid or limit time around others who are sick or may be sick.
  - Consider maintaining social distancing or wearing a mask, particularly if you are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, influenza or other respiratory infections.
- If you are sick, stay home from work and away from others to avoid spreading illness. This includes keeping children out of school when they are sick and not taking them to events or activities.
- Consider avoiding crowded and indoor areas where distancing is not possible, or where you will be in close contact with anyone who is not a member of your household, or whose vaccination and illness status may be unknown.

Northern Virginia hospitals and health districts will continue to closely monitor respiratory illnesses in Northern Virginia and disease trends locally. While no one can predict the full effect of these diseases on the community, practicing preventive actions to the greatest extent possible will help protect the community from illness.

### **For More Information**

For more information on health issues in Northern Virginia, visit [staywellnova.com](https://staywellnova.com). To find a COVID-19 or flu vaccination location, visit [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov), [vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov) or contact the [Loudoun County Health Department](https://loudouncountypa.gov/health) at [health@loudoun.gov](mailto:health@loudoun.gov).

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### **About NVERS**

The Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS) is a collaboration of the region's health care and public safety systems and comprises 16 acute care hospitals and 29 counties, cities, and towns. NVERS coordinates a regional approach to emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

### **About Northern Region Health Districts**

The Northern Virginia region includes health districts representing Loudoun, Fairfax, Prince William and Arlington counties, including all towns and municipalities, and the City of Alexandria.