



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Health Department Encourages Residents to Take Action to Prevent Respiratory Illnesses**

Loudoun County health officials encourage residents to stay current on the latest recommendations for preventing respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, seasonal flu and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus). As colder weather arrives and Loudoun residents increase indoor activities, the potential for the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses also increases. Health officials advise that getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent illness due to viruses.

“We recommend that Loudoun residents talk to their health care providers about receiving the 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine, as well as the flu and RSV vaccines,” said Loudoun County Health Department Director Dr. David Goodfriend. “COVID-19 and flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older and is especially important for people who are 65 and older and for people with compromised immune systems because they are at higher risk for severe illness and hospitalization.”

#### **COVID-19 Vaccine**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [updated its COVID-19 vaccine recommendation in September](#). The updated COVID-19 vaccines made by Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax have been approved by the federal government for use this season.

The new COVID-19 vaccine is now available at many pharmacies and physicians’ offices. Visit [vaccines.gov](http://vaccines.gov) or text your zip code to GETVAX (438829) to find available vaccination appointments at nearby medical offices and pharmacies.

While the federal program that made COVID-19 vaccines free for everyone during the pandemic is no long in effect, the CDC states that most residents can still get a COVID-19 vaccine for free to them. For people with health insurance, most plans will cover COVID-19 vaccine at no cost. Adults who do not have health insurance or have health plans that do not cover the cost can get a free vaccine from local pharmacies participating in the CDC’s [Bridge Access Program](#).

This year, Loudoun County will not be a provider of COVID-19 vaccine to the general public as the county was during the earlier stages of the pandemic. The Loudoun County Health Department is prepared to provide vaccine to income-eligible residents and to residents who do not have health insurance.

#### **Free COVID-19 Tests**

If you are experiencing any [COVID-19 symptoms](#), consider getting tested. The federal government is once again offering residents four free COVID-19 rapid test kits. Residents can order the free test kits online at [covid.gov/tests](http://covid.gov/tests).

## Flu and RSV Vaccines

Residents also can take action to protect themselves against other respiratory illnesses, including the seasonal flu and RSV. Health officials recommend that residents protect themselves against the seasonal flu virus by getting a flu vaccine, which can be administered at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine. Residents can find flu vaccine providers in our community online at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

Vaccines also are available to protect infants and older adults from severe RSV. RSV vaccine is recommended for those under 8 months and over 60 years of age, as well as for pregnant women to help protect their babies. To learn more about RSV, visit [cdc.gov/rsv](https://www.cdc.gov/rsv).

## Stop the Spread of Germs

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are a few simple steps that everyone in the community can follow to help prevent the spread of the germs that cause all types of respiratory illnesses. Health officials encourage everyone to practice these prevention measures throughout the year:

- **Stay home when sick.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. Also consider getting tested for COVID-19 or the flu.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.** Cover your nose and mouth with your inside of your elbow, or with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- **[Wash your hands properly](#) and often with soap and water.** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects.** Surfaces may be contaminated with viruses that cause flu.

## More Information

In addition to taking action to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses in the Loudoun community this fall and winter, public health officials encourage everyone to learn more about these illnesses, including the symptoms, how to care for yourself and your family should anyone get sick, and when to seek medical attention. All of the information Loudoun residents need is posted on the CDC's website:

- [cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19)
- [cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- [cdc.gov/rsv](https://www.cdc.gov/rsv)

For more information about the Loudoun County Health Department, visit [loudoun.gov/health](https://loudoun.gov/health).

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