

Department On Aging And IDPH Directors Urge Older Adults To Get Vaccinated In New Holiday PSA

by Iris Schweier

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SPRINGFIELD - Director Paula Basta of the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) and Dr. Sameer Vohra, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), are coming together to encourage older adults across Illinois to get up-to-date on their vaccinations ahead of the holidays.

“Winter illnesses are always something we prepare for, and with COVID-19 trending upwards, we want to reinforce the importance of getting up-to-date on vaccinations — including the updated booster shot — ahead of the holidays,” said IDoA Director Basta. “I want all older adults to live long, healthy lives — and you can do that by getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and the flu. It’s not too late: visit your local pharmacy or call our senior helpline at 1-800-252-8966 to get assistance making an appointment.”

“Both Director Basta and I received our updated COVID-19 boosters and flu shots in the fall to protect ourselves from winter illnesses, and we want all Illinoisans to know that it’s not too late to get yours too,” said IDPH Director Vohra. “New variants of COVID-19 spread more easily, which is why updated boosters were developed to build stronger protection. The rise of COVID-19 and increasing cases of flu are a problematic combination for people with chronic medical conditions and weaker immune systems and taking preventative measures are critical to keeping individuals safe and protected. IDPH continues to recommend getting up-to-date on your vaccinations, particularly before we gather with family and friends for the holidays. The data indicates that seniors who are NOT up-to-date on vaccinations are almost 3 times more likely to end up in the hospital if they contract COVID-19.”

The latest IDPH data shows an increase in COVID-19 and influenza cases across the state. There have been 23,334 new cases and 1,667 COVID-19-related hospitalizations in the last week, the most since February 15, 2022. In addition, CDC data shows that 86 counties in Illinois rated at an elevated level for COVID-19

up from 74 a week ago. A total of 9,544 people have tested positive for influenza this year, including 1,757 this week alone. Of those, 488 people with influenza were admitted to the ICU.

To reinforce this critical message ahead of the holidays, Directors Basta and Vohra released a [holiday PSA message](#) directed at older adults where they answer common questions and highlight fact-based information on the vaccines.

Data indicates the risk of hospitalization and severe outcomes from COVID-19 is much higher for unvaccinated people than for those who are up to date on their vaccinations. To find a vaccine provider — including nearly all local pharmacies and many health clinics and doctor’s offices — or make an appointment, visit

www.vaccines.gov or call 1-800-232-0233.