

# **IDPH Launches Campaign to Fight Triple Threat of COVID-19, Flu, RSV**

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**CHICAGO** – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has launched a new awareness campaign called *'Tis The Sneezin'* to remind residents to vaccinate against the fall and winter triple threat: the flu, COVID and RSV. The announcement comes as data indicates six counties in the state are at an elevated level for COVID-19 hospitalizations, according to the [CDC's national COVID Data Tracker](#) as of the week ending October 14. However, the total number of COVID-19 hospitalizations in the state has been trending downward in recent weeks, with 503 hospitalizations for the week, down 8% from the previous week.

Also this week the [CDC issued an alert to healthcare providers](#) advising of a shortage of a medication called nirsevimab which is used to protect infants from RSV. The CDC is recommending that doses should be prioritized for infants under 6 months and those

with certain risk factors. The CDC also recommended that expectant parents talk to their healthcare provider about receiving an RSV vaccine approved for use during the 32<sup>nd</sup> to 36<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy that protects newborns from RSV.

“IDPH is continuing to work closely with local, state, and federal partners to monitor the three respiratory viruses that caused last fall and winter’s tripledemic,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “We encourage all Illinois residents to do the same to prevent illness and protect yourself and your loved ones. The tools include washing your hands, improving ventilation inside your homes, staying home if sick, and getting immunized with the vaccines available to you. Why? Because . . . *‘Tis the Sneezin’*.”

Highlighting a common way respiratory viruses spread, the *’Tis The Sneezin’* campaign showcases everyday moments interrupted by a common symptom of the flu, COVID and RSV, along with a punny call to action to encourage vaccinations. Following are some examples (click on links to see videos):

- [Rideshare](#): Don’t pick up illnesses this winter. Vaccines can keep you healthy through the holiday sneezin’.
- [Elevator](#): Ding! Sneezin’ season is coming up. Avoid coming down with symptoms by getting up to date on all vaccines.
- [Detention](#): Teach the flu, COVID and RSV a lesson on who’s boss. Get vaccinated and avoid the holiday sneezin’.
- [Selfie](#): Sickness always has the worst timing. Get protected from the holiday sneezin’ by getting vaccinated.

The campaign will reach Illinoisans in every corner of the state in both English and Spanish through a variety of traditional and online media channels, including cable, broadcast and connected TV; streaming audio and radio; billboards and bus shelters; digital display and video; print and social media

In September, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended newly reformulated COVID-19 shots for everyone over the age of 6 months. The federal agencies have given the green light for updated mRNA vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer that target the currently circulating strains of the COVID-19 virus. They also have recently approved an updated Novavax COVID-19 vaccine.

These newly approved shots are considered safe when given at the same time as other vaccines for the flu and RSV.

Studies have consistently shown that COVID-19 vaccines lower the risk of getting symptomatic COVID-19 and improve protection against serious illness, hospitalization

and death. New evidence is also emerging that it can protect you from long Covid and flu vaccines are also protective against heart disease. Most Americans can still get a COVID-19 vaccine for free. For people with health insurance, most plans will cover the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost. People who don't have health insurance or with health plans that do not cover the cost can get a free vaccine from their local health centers and pharmacies.

For those who are uninsured or under-insured, the CDC this summer launched the [Bridge Access Program](#) that will cover the cost of COVID-19 vaccines this fall. The [Vaccines for Children Program](#) will cover vaccines for eligible children.

In June, the CDC's ACIP recommended use of a single dose of RSV vaccine for persons 60 years of age and older. In August, ACIP also recommended a new preventive measure against RSV for infants under 8 months and toddlers at high risk, a new monoclonal antibody shot called nirsevimab. This medication was the subject of the CDC's advisory that warned of shortages and urged healthcare providers to prioritize the use of nirsevimab.

On September 22, ACIP recommended seasonal administration of one dose of RSV vaccine during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy, to maximize protection for babies after birth.

For treatment of COVID-19, Illinoisans who experience symptoms can access no cost-share telehealth services through the [SIU School of Medicine Covid Test to Treat](#) services or call (217) 545-5100.

Illinois has more than 170,000 courses of effective therapeutic medications, including Paxlovid and Lagevrio, supplied through the US government that are available through providers and pharmacies that will continue to be provided free of charge to those with Medicare, Medicaid and the uninsured until supplies run out. Paxlovid and Lagevrio will also be commercially available in November 2023.

The CDC recently launched a [new national respiratory virus dashboard](#) that allows the public to view the levels of COVID-19, flu and RSV in each state.

Additional resources and COVID-19 data can be found at <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19.html>.

The federal government has established a website that provides an all-purpose toolkit with information on how to obtain masks, treatment, vaccines and testing resources for all areas of the country at: <https://www.covid.gov/>.