

## Clearing up confusion about respiratory virus prevention recommendations

Fall 2023

As cold, flu and RSV season approaches, COVID-19 cases are already sharply increasing — and so are [hospitalizations and deaths](#). A thoughtful strategy and plan can help protect American families and businesses from another disruptive surge in respiratory viruses.

## Proven Workplace Strategies to Improve Vaccination Rates and Lessen the Spread of Viruses

1

### Provide Simple, Frequent Communications

- Optimize *all* channels
- Include leader messages (“I want you to enjoy a healthy holiday season,” “my vaccine took only 5 minutes...”)
- Share racially and ethnically diverse employee stories (“I trust my community’s doctors/elders/leaders who recommend vaccines...”)

2

### Stay Ahead of the Curve

Know when to increase communications and safety reminders by staying attuned to emerging risks, outbreaks, trends, and recommendations through CDC data trackers:

- [COVID-19](#)
- [Influenza](#)
- [RSV](#)

Remind employees to stay ahead with simple practices (e.g., hand hygiene, not coughing/sneezing into their hands, COVID-19 testing, staying home when ill...)

3

### Offer No-Cost Immunization Clinics On- or Near-Site

- Integrate with health fairs and related events
- Include everyone across all work sites, regardless of benefits eligibility
- Set and report on vaccination goals with creative visuals (e.g., thermometer rising, year-to-year comparisons...)
- Partner with [local public health departments](#) to learn more about hosting vaccine update clinics

4

### Remove Vaccine Barriers

- Remove copayments/coinsurance
- Offer vouchers to those who are not benefit eligible
- Publicize vaccination site finders:

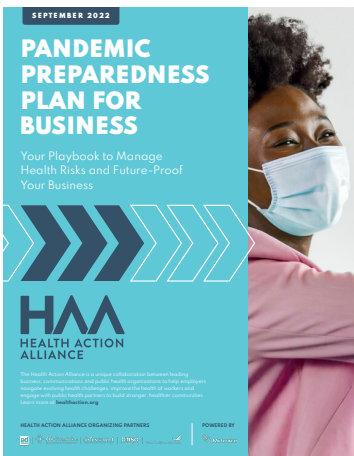
**Vaccines.gov**  
**1-800-232-0233**  
**Text ZIP code to 438829**

5

### Pump Up Preventive Care Engagement

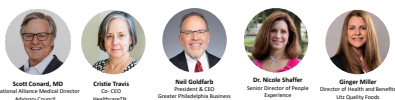
- Help employees connect with a primary care doctor — and your prevention and condition management benefits — to guide them in sickness and in health
- Use the National Alliance toolkit, [Getting Back to Basics](#), to customize and simplify messaging
- Share CDC immunization schedules for [adults](#) and [children](#)
- Offer sick leave so employees can afford to stay home when they are ill

## Helpful Resources to Protect Workplace and Workforce Health *(Click on images and links to learn more)*



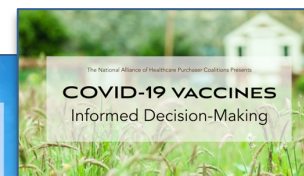
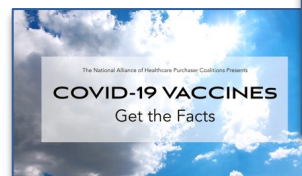
### Watch the Recorded Webinar: “Employer Prevention Strategies to Improve Quality, Safety & Wellbeing”

#### Speakers



#### National Alliance Resources:

- [Getting Back to Basics Protects Health & Wellbeing](#)
- [Immunizations and High-Value Care](#)
- [COVID-19 Healthcare Impact: The Long View](#)
- 101 videos:



#### Additional Resources:

- [CDC’s Guide to Vaccinating Workers](#)
- [CDC Recommends Updated COVID-19 Vaccine for Fall/Winter Virus Season](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Immunization Schedule](#)
- [CDC: How to Request a Vaccination Clinic On-Site](#)
- [Get the Latest on COVID-19, Flu, and RSV](#)
- [Epidemiologic Characteristics of Long COVID](#)
- [Employer’s Guide to Running a Vaccination Clinic for COVID-19 and Flu](#)
- [Select Respiratory Disease Employer Playbook 2023](#)

See Common Questions & Key Messages



## Responding to Common Questions

1

### Who should get which vaccines?

CDC recommends everyone six months and older get an **updated COVID-19 vaccine** to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 illness this fall and winter. The **flu vaccine** is recommended for everyone aged six months and older, and the **RSV vaccine** is for everyone 60 and older, in consultation with their healthcare provider.

2

### Who is at highest risk for serious complications from COVID-19, influenza & RSV?

People over age 65 and those with weakened immune systems or conditions such as chronic lung disease, obesity, diabetes, or kidney disease are at greatest risk for serious illness, hospitalization and death.

**75%**

**Of US adults**

are estimated to have at least one risk factor that may increase risk of severe COVID-19

3

### When should I get the updated COVID-19 vaccine?

According to CDC, if you have not received a COVID-19 vaccine in the last two months, you can get the updated vaccine to protect yourself this fall and winter. Those in high-risk categories, however, should not wait unless their doctor advises otherwise.

Keep in mind, it is perfectly safe to get your COVID-19 and flu shots at the same time. The RSV vaccine should be given 1-2 weeks later.

4

### Why should I get the updated COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccination remains the **best protection** against COVID-19-related, serious illness, hospitalization and death. Vaccination also reduces the chance of suffering the effects of **long COVID** among children and adults, according to **CDC epidemiologists**. Long COVID can develop during or following acute infection and last for an extended time, interfering with your ability to work and enjoy daily activities.

5

### I recently had COVID. Do I still need the updated vaccine?

CDC advises that healthy people who have been infected fewer than six months ago may wait **three months for a booster**. Those at high risk of serious illness should talk to their doctors about more-frequent COVID vaccines.

## Improving Vaccine Confidence: Key Messages to Consider

- **It's a vaccine, not a booster.** For decades, people have sought protection against the influenza virus each year by getting their annual vaccine. As COVID-19 has evolved from pandemic to an endemic that is here to stay, people should consider the protection against coronavirus in the same way they do the flu. This means getting updated vaccines as recommended by CDC. Just as the flu vaccine must be updated each year to target the viruses most likely to be circulating, the updated COVID vaccine helps raise waning immunity.
- **If you don't want to get the COVID vaccine for yourself, get it for your loved ones, coworkers, and community members.** It's not always obvious who is at highest risk for severe illness, hospitalization and death. When you get vaccinated, you help protect others, including infants, people over age 65, and those with weakened immune systems or certain health conditions.
- **Vaccines may not prevent illness, but they do lessen the chance of serious illness.** Vaccines are never 100% effective due to how viruses mutate as they cross the world. They are, however, **highly effective** in preventing serious illness and death.
- **Vaccines work.** For example, smallpox, polio, diphtheria, mumps, measles, and rubella have nearly been eliminated in the US through vaccination. Vaccines **do not** cause autism, Bell's palsy, miscarriage, or infertility, some of the common **myths** circulating. When in doubt, talk to your own trusted doctor.
- **The virus, not the vaccine, is the enemy.** Myths have accompanied vaccine rollouts since they were discovered. It's important to rely on scientific evidence and trustworthy scientists and doctors to get the facts. When in doubt, talk to your own doctor or pharmacist about your concerns. Another reason it's important to have a primary doctor in your corner.

*"The pandemic reinforced the critical role of immunizations but it also raised newfound concerns, confusion and misinformation. With the end of the public health emergency, employers expect to double down on education and employee engagement to encourage vaccinations across the board."*

*Michael Thompson  
National Alliance President & CEO*