

# Feds urge vaccination as 'triple-demic' hits more Americans

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Flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 are creating a

perfect storm of respiratory disease that is overwhelming the nation's health care systems.

Vaccination will be key to patients getting through the winter holidays with their health intact, Rochelle Walensky, M.D., director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said during a media briefing Monday. "For two of the three viruses discussed today, there are vaccines," Walensky said. "Both the updated COVID-19 vaccines and this year's flu vaccines were formulated to protect against the viruses that are currently circulating."

Unfortunately, not enough people are taking advantage of this protection. "Concerningly, for some of these higher risk groups like children, adults over 65, and pregnant people, we are seeing lower rates of vaccination compared to this time last year," Walensky said. Meanwhile, flu vaccination coverage is about 12 percent lower in [pregnant women](#) and 5 percent lower in children than it was last year, Walensky added.

Flu levels are high in 47 states and territories around the nation, up from 36 jurisdictions last week, Walensky noted. So far this season, there have been 8.7 million cases of flu-like illness, 78,000 hospitalizations from flu, and 4,500 deaths, Walensky said. Those include 14 children who have died from the flu. COVID-19 also is starting to rear its head, fueling a 15 to 20 percent increase in hospitalizations during the last week.

On the other hand, there are early signs that the RSV wave that hit children particularly hard might be abating in some parts of the country, according to Walensky. "We have seen signs that RSV may have peaked in some areas like the South and Southeast and may be leveling off in the mid-Atlantic, New England, and Midwest," Walensky said.

"While this is encouraging, [respiratory viruses](#) continue to spread at high levels nationwide. Even in areas where RSV may be decreasing, our hospital systems continue to be stretched with high numbers of patients with other respiratory illnesses."

Walensky made a point to recognize health care and public [health](#) workers during the briefing. "The past several years have certainly not been easy, and we now face yet another surge of illness, another moment of overstretched capacity, and really one of tragic and often preventable sadness," Walensky said. "We could not be more thankful for the work you continue to do every single day to save lives."

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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