

Too few Americans are getting vaccinated for flu, COVID & RSV, CDC warns

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Low vaccination rates for the flu, RSV and COVID-19 are putting Americans at higher risk for severe illness and hospitalization this winter, a new government alert warned Thursday.

There is an "urgent need" to boost vaccination rates as the trio of viruses spread through the country, the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention said.

"Low [vaccination rates](#), coupled with ongoing increases in national and international respiratory disease activity caused by multiple pathogens, including [influenza viruses](#), SARS-CoV-2 [the virus that causes COVID-19], and RSV, could lead to more severe disease and increased health care capacity strain in the coming weeks," the agency wrote in its [advisory](#). "In addition, a recent increase in cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) following SARS-CoV-2 infection in the United States has been reported."

How low are vaccination rates?

With the flu, roughly 7 million fewer adults have gotten their flu shot so far this season compared with last season. Overall, the vaccination rate is about 36% for both adults and children, according to CDC data.

For COVID-19, coverage is even worse: Just 17% of adults aged 18 and up and about 8% of children have gotten the latest shot, according to CDC data. That includes about 36% of seniors, who are at higher risk for [severe disease](#).

Even the new RSV [vaccine](#) isn't being embraced by [older adults](#). Only about 16% of those 60 and older have gotten the shot, the data showed.

What's behind the low vaccination rates?

Key reasons include a lack of provider recommendation, concerns about side effects, and a lack of time or forgetting to get vaccinated, according to a national survey of adults that was included in the CDC advisory.

"We are seeing too few folks get vaccinated this season," CDC Director Dr. Mandy Cohen said during a briefing this week with the American Medical Association, CNN reported. "The voice of the physician matters so much in whether or not folks decide to get vaccinated."

"About 70 to 80% of American adults over the age of 18 have at least one condition that puts them at higher risk of a bad outcome," Cohen added during the briefing. "Getting vaccinated decreases your risk of hospitalization and death at every age, including 18 to 64, but it also decreases your risk of long COVID."

Meanwhile, emergency department visits and hospitalizations for respiratory diseases are rising across all groups, CDC data showed.

In the past four weeks, hospitalizations increased 200% for flu, 51% for COVID and 60% for RSV, the advisory noted. There have also been 30 reports of MIS-C, a rare complication in children infected with COVID that typically surfaces a month after infection.

The CDC recommends that people talk with their [health care providers](#) about vaccines that are recommended for them and their families. And simple things, like covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands and staying home when sick, can also help stem the spread of respiratory viruses.

"These tools that protect us—vaccines ... testing and treatment and washing hands and ventilation and masks—all of these things are layers of protection that help make sure that we can weather this season," Cohen said.

More information: Visit the CDC for more on how to [avoid infection with respiratory viruses](#).

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