



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Zanesville-Muskingum County

Respiratory Illness Guidance

Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department

October 2025

CDC estimates that at least 1 million people were hospitalized and more than 70,000 people died from respiratory virus illnesses in 2024

Respiratory illnesses affect your lungs and airways, making it hard to breathe. These illnesses share common symptoms, risk factors, and prevention strategies.

Common respiratory illnesses include:

- Flu
- COVID-19
- RSV
- Adenovirus
- Rhinovirus (common cold)
- Parainfluenza
- RSV
- Parvovirus B19 (Fifth Disease)

Respiratory viruses may affect both the upper respiratory tract (the vocal cords and above) and the lower respiratory tract (below the vocal cords). Some viruses that affect the nose and throat can progress to cause serious lung infections, such as pneumonia.

Symptoms of Respiratory Illnesses

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose/congestion
- Muscle/body aches
- Headache
- Fever
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting/diarrhea
- Decreased appetite
- Loss of taste/smell
- Weakness



What To Do When You Are Sick

You can go back to your normal activities when **BOTH ARE TRUE**:

- Your symptoms are getting better overall for at least 24 hours
- You have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours



When you go back to your normal activities, take precautions over the next 5 days

- Take steps for cleaner air
- Practice good hygiene
- Wear a well-fitted mask
- Physical distancing
- Test for times when you will be around other people



Risk Factors for Respiratory Illnesses

Age: Adults who are 65 years and older and children younger than 2 years old are usually at higher risk for getting very sick from respiratory illnesses.

Underlying conditions: Having medical conditions (for example, chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease), a weakened immune system, disability, and/or being pregnant are conditions that might increase your risk.



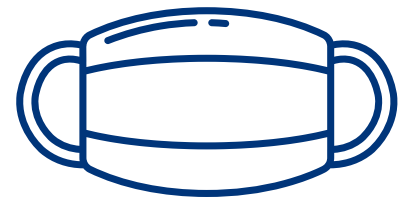
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Prevention Strategies

CDC recommends that all people use these core measures to protect themselves and others from respiratory illnesses.

- Stay up-to-date with immunizations, which are available for all three major fall and winter respiratory virus illnesses – flu, COVID-19, and RSV (for eligible groups).
- Practice good hygiene, like washing your hands and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.
- Take steps for cleaner air— bringing in fresh outside air, purifying indoor air, or gathering outdoors
- When sick, use precautions to prevent the spread of illness
- Seek healthcare promptly when ill for treatment if you are at higher risk for getting very sick from respiratory illnesses.
- Actions like masking and physical distancing can help prevent being exposed to an illness or help reduce the spread if you're sick.
- Tests are available that can quickly detect these respiratory viruses, so patients don't delay treatment and other actions that can protect their family, friends, and coworkers



Treatment

Treatment with antiviral medication can reduce severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Flu and COVID-19 treatments are widely available and are recommended for those at higher risk for severe illness. Treatments for flu and COVID-19 work best when taken as soon as possible.



Did You Know?

- Antivirals are taken for viral infections like flu and COVID-19.
- Antibiotics are taken for bacterial infections.
- Antiviral medications and antibiotics are not sold over the counter in the United States.
- You can only get these medications if you have a prescription from a health care provider.