

FAQ:

Respiratory Vaccine Appointments for Patients 50+

CVEEP
Fighting Infectious
Respiratory Disease

Respiratory season is here, and depending on your age and health status, it may be recommended for you to get vaccinations for flu, COVID-19, RSV, or pneumococcal infection. The below FAQ can serve as a starting place as you make your vaccine appointments and take steps to stay healthy.



How do vaccines work?

Vaccines prepare your body ahead of an infection. They safely mimic an infection to teach your immune system how to recognize and fight off harmful germs like viruses and bacteria if you're exposed.¹ There are different types of vaccines, but they all have the same goal – to provide you with the best protection against severe illness.



Which vaccines are recommended for me this season?

The vaccines you can receive depend on your age, vaccination history, and any chronic medical conditions you may have. These factors can impact how likely you are to experience severe respiratory illness, making it more important to be vaccinated and stay protected. Let's discuss the recommendations for flu, RSV, COVID-19, and pneumococcal vaccinations:

Flu

- The 2025-2026 flu vaccine has been approved and recommended for:
 - ▶ Everyone—with rare exceptions—6 months and older.

See the CDC's 2025-2026 recommendations [here](#).

RSV

- A single dose of RSV vaccine is recommended for:
 - ▶ All adults age 75 and older.
 - ▶ Adults ages 50-74 who are at increased risk of severe illness from RSV (such as those with chronic heart or lung illness or those who are residents of long-term care facilities).

Note: Adult RSV vaccines can be given any time of year.

- Protection against RSV is recommended for:
 - ▶ All infants younger than 8 months entering their first RSV season (either through maternal vaccination during pregnancy or with the RSV antibody after birth)
- Infants and young children ages 8-19 months who are at increased risk of severe RSV disease entering their second RSV season (such as infants and young children who have chronic lung disease due to premature birth, are severely immunocompromised, or have certain other medical conditions) should receive the RSV antibody.

Note: RSV immunizations to protect infants are given during the RSV season. Talk to your healthcare provider for details.

See the CDC's recommendations [here](#).

COVID-19

- FDA-approved 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccines are recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for those:
 - ▶ 6 months to 64 years of age based on individual decision-making, also known as shared clinical decision-making.* Vaccination is most favorable for those at [increased risk](#) for severe COVID-19 disease.
 - ▶ 65+ based on individual decision-making.
 - ▶ This recommendation does not require a prescription to receive a 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccine, though encourages people to talk to a health care provider (e.g., doctor, nurse, pharmacist) to help them assess if the vaccine is right for them. COVID-19 vaccines should be available at your local pharmacy but call ahead to ensure availability.

In conversation with a healthcare provider, the decision to vaccinate is made based on individual characteristics, including risk factors, characteristics of the vaccine itself, and evidence of who may benefit from vaccination.

Pneumococcal Disease

- Depending on vaccination history, pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for:
 - ▶ All adults age 50 and older.
 - ▶ Adults 19-49 years old with certain medical conditions that increase their risk. Examples of underlying medical conditions can be found [here](#).
 - ▶ All children younger than 5 years: routine 4-dose series at 2, 4, 6, and 12-15 months.
 - ▶ Additional protection is recommended for children ages 5-18 years with certain medical conditions that increase their risk. Examples of underlying medical conditions can be found [here](#).

Talk to a healthcare provider to determine whether you should get a pneumococcal vaccine and which vaccine is right for you. See the CDC's recommendations [here](#).

Note: Pneumococcal vaccines can be given any time of year.



How much do vaccines cost?

Nearly every private and public health insurance plan covers all vaccines recommended by the CDC's ACIP free of cost. Individual states may also offer more expansive coverage than what is required by federal law.

Private Insurance

Those with private health insurance, including those with employer-provided insurance, can access respiratory vaccines with no out-of-pocket costs through in-network providers.

Medicare

Under Medicare, all respiratory vaccines are covered with no out-of-pocket costs. Flu, COVID-19, and pneumococcal vaccines are covered through Medicare Part B and coverage is not dependent on an ACIP recommendation. ACIP-recommended RSV vaccines are covered through Medicare Part D.

Medicaid

All ACIP-recommended vaccines are available to Medicaid beneficiaries with no out-of-pocket costs.



What are the common side effects from vaccines, and how can I manage them?

Common vaccine side effects include soreness at the injection site and a low-grade fever. Chills, fatigue, headache, and muscle and joint aches can also occur.² For any side effects that don't go away, contact your doctor.



If I still get sick, how will being vaccinated help?

While you may still get infected if you're vaccinated, being up to date with vaccines makes you far less likely to get seriously ill, be hospitalized, or die for infectious respiratory illnesses.³ In other words, vaccination prevents the most dangerous complications that stem from severe illness.⁴ Getting vaccinated can mean the difference between a mild infection and a severe illness.



How long will protection last after these vaccines?

Some vaccines, like pneumococcal vaccines, provide long-term protection. On the other hand, viruses like flu and COVID-19 can change often, so vaccines against these viruses are updated and should be received more regularly, often on an annual basis, to provide protection against new variants of these viruses as they emerge.⁵ RSV vaccines provide protection for at least two years, and current guidance recommends that older adults just receive the vaccine once.⁶

Adults 50+ are at higher risk for severe illness. Vaccination is the best protection.

For more information on respiratory illness season, go to cveep.org/vaccines-protect

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/basics/explaining-how-vaccines-work.html>

² <https://www.hhs.gov/immunization/basics/safety/side-effects/index.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/basics/explaining-how-vaccines-work.html>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/vaccines/adults.html>

For more information, visit
CVEEP.org/Vaccines-Protect