

FAQ: Respiratory Vaccines for Adults 50+

Your vaccine needs change depending on your age and health status. As you age, your immune system naturally weakens, putting adults ages 50 and older at a significantly higher risk of severe illness from infectious respiratory diseases.

Vaccines are the most effective tool to help protect your health.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines prepare your body to fight an infection before you are exposed. They teach your body how to recognize and fight harmful germs like viruses and bacteria.¹ There are different types of vaccines, but they all help protect against serious illness.

How do age and health conditions affect my risk?

As you get older, your body's immune response can become less effective at fighting infections. This can increase your risk of becoming seriously ill from infectious respiratory diseases.

Adults 50 and older may also be more likely to have health conditions that can increase their risk. These can include chronic heart or lung disease, diabetes, and obesity.

Talk with your healthcare provider about your individual risk and which vaccines may be recommended for you.

What vaccines are recommended for me?

The vaccines recommended for you can depend on factors such as your age, vaccination history, and certain health conditions. Vaccination is the best protection against many infectious illnesses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and leading medical societies recommend the following vaccines for adults ages 50 and older:^{2,3}

Flu

Everyone ages 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year.

Adults ages 65 years and older should receive a higher-dose flu vaccine or an adjuvanted flu vaccine.

Additionally, an FDA-approved mRNA vaccine is available and recommended by leading medical societies for adults 50 and older.

RSV

A single dose of RSV vaccine is recommended for:

- All adults ages 75 and older.
- Adults ages 50-74 who are at increased risk of severe illness from RSV (such as those with chronic heart, liver, kidney, or lung disease, diabetes, obesity, or those who are residents of long-term care facilities).

COVID-19

The 2026-2027 COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for all adults. Vaccination is especially important for people at increased risk for severe COVID-19.

Different COVID-19 vaccines are available for different age groups, and the number of doses recommended may vary based on age, health and vaccination history.

[Learn more](#) about certain health conditions that may put you at greater risk of severe illness and talk to your healthcare provider about what's right for you.

Pneumococcal Disease

Pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for all adults ages 50 and older.

Depending on your age, health status, and vaccination history, you may be recommended to receive a particular type of pneumococcal vaccine, so talk with a healthcare provider to choose the right option for you.

How much do vaccines cost?

Most private and public health insurance plans cover respiratory vaccines at no cost to you.*

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, respiratory vaccines are covered with no out-of-pocket costs.

- Flu, COVID-19, and pneumococcal vaccines are covered through Medicare Part B.
- RSV vaccines are covered through Medicare Part D.

Medicaid

Respiratory vaccines are available to Medicaid beneficiaries with no out-of-pocket costs.

**COVID-19 vaccines are broadly covered at no-cost to the individual. Private insurance plans, Medicare, TRICARE, and Medicaid cover COVID-19 vaccines at no-cost but check with your plan if you have questions about how or where to get your COVID-19 vaccine.*

What are 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.⁴ If you have questions about side effects, contact a healthcare provider.

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

Vaccines can help protect you from getting seriously ill, even if you do get sick.¹ Staying up to date with recommended vaccines can lower your risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and other serious complications.⁵

How long will protection last after these vaccines?

Some vaccines, such as pneumococcal vaccines, provide long-term protection. On the other hand, flu and COVID-19 vaccines are given more regularly to help protect against viruses that change over time.

RSV vaccination provides protection for at least two years, and people who have already received an RSV vaccine are not currently recommended to receive another dose.⁶

Where can I get vaccinated?

Vaccines are available at many healthcare provider offices, pharmacies, community health centers, and other local clinics. Your local and state health departments may also offer vaccines.



Use CVEEP's Vaccine Locator Tool to find a vaccination location near you:
cveep.org/vaccine-locator

Adults 50 and older are at higher risk for severe illness from infectious diseases.

Staying up to date with recommended vaccines can help protect your health.

Are treatments available if I get sick?

Yes. Antiviral medications are available to treat some illnesses, including COVID-19 and flu. These treatments can help reduce the risk of severe illness and work best when started soon after symptoms begin.

If you develop symptoms, especially if you are at higher risk for severe illness, contact your healthcare provider promptly to find out whether treatment may be right for you.

For more information about vaccines for adults 50+, visit cveep.org/50plus.

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

² <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/adult-age.html>

³ <https://www.aafp.org/clinical-insights/immunizations-and-vaccines/immunizations-schedules-resources/adult-immunization-schedules>

⁴ <https://www.hhs.gov/immunization/basics/safety/side-effects/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/index.html>

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