



Pennsylvania
Department of Health

Pennsylvania
Insurance Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Contact: Mark O'Neill, DOH, ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov
Adrian Sipes, PID, ra-in-press@pa.gov
Kirstin Alvanitakis, Lt. Governor's
Office, kirstinalv@pa.gov kirstinalv@pa.gov

**As Federal Government Sows Confusion Around Vaccine
Recommendations, Shapiro-Davis Administration Encourages
Pennsylvanians to Follow the Science and Receive Safe, Effective Flu
Shots as Respiratory Virus Season Begins**

The Shapiro Administration has taken decisive action recently to ensure Pennsylvanians and their doctors have clear, evidence-based information to make health care decisions.

Getting an annual flu shot can protect Pennsylvanians from serious illness and even death

Williamsport, PA – Pennsylvania Lt. Governor Austin Davis, Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen, and Insurance Commissioner Michael Humphreys visited **River Valley Health** in Williamsport today to encourage all Pennsylvanians to get their annual flu shot and keep themselves protected against the virus as respiratory virus season begins this week.

As the federal government sows confusion around vaccine recommendations, the **Shapiro-Davis Administration** has [taken action](#) to protect Pennsylvanians' access to vaccines and safeguard personal freedoms. Last week, **Pennsylvania's State Board of Medicine, State Board of Nursing, and State Board of Osteopathic Medicine** voted to formally endorse the **Pennsylvania Department of Health's (DOH)** [new vaccine](#)

[guidance](#), giving doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and families clear, evidence-based standards to follow.

“As a father, son, and husband, I view it as my responsibility to get vaccinated, so I can keep myself and my family healthy and protected from the flu, which puts hundreds of thousands of Americans in the hospital every year,” said **Lt. Governor Davis**, who received his flu shot during the visit to River Valley Health. “Newborns and infants are incredibly vulnerable to the flu, so it’s important to keep levels low in our communities to protect our youngest Pennsylvanians.”

The 2025-2026 respiratory virus season began on September 28.

During the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season, DOH recorded 234,276 laboratory-confirmed cases, 40,387 hospital admissions, and 1,049 deaths related to the flu. Additionally, 280 children across the United States died from influenza during the 2024-2025 flu season, half of whom did not have an underlying medical condition.

“As a practicing pediatrician for more than three decades, I have seen thousands of children become sick with the flu, with some of them becoming seriously ill,” said **Dr. Bogen**. “Getting your child, and yourself, vaccinated against the flu annually reduces your own risk of infection and hospitalization and also helps protect people in your community at high risk for severe illness related to the virus.”

Most insurance plans cover the flu vaccine at no cost, but for people who are uninsured or underinsured, the flu vaccine is available through local [State Health Centers](#) and [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#). For children who qualify, the flu vaccine and other routine childhood immunizations are available at no cost through the [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) Program](#).

“The Pennsylvania Insurance Department encourages all Pennsylvanians to receive the flu vaccine,” said **Commissioner Humphreys**. “All insured consumers can receive the flu vaccine at no cost, so long as they go to an in-network provider. The flu vaccine is the first line of defense in preventing severe illness or hospitalization, so Pennsylvanians should not forego this vaccination in fear of an unexpected charge. If you’re covered, so is the flu shot.”

Last week, to ensure that Pennsylvanians have access to the vaccines, DOH issued [new vaccine guidance](#). This followed [earlier action taken](#) by the Governor to safeguard Pennsylvanians’ ability to make their own health care choices, when he called for the **State Board of Pharmacy** to protect COVID vaccine access for those most in need.

Consistent vaccine guidance ensures providers, insurers, and public health systems work together, giving Pennsylvanians reliable access to critical immunizations and safeguarding community health. By providing clear, evidence-based recommendations, the Shapiro-

Davis Administration is helping to keep vaccines accessible and aligned across health care systems to protect the health of all Pennsylvanians.

The flu vaccine is updated annually to protect against current virus variants. [Health care providers recommend](#) that residents six months and older get vaccinated against the flu.

The vaccine is especially important for high-risk groups, including people 65 and older, people with certain medical conditions, and those at a higher risk of developing complications from respiratory illness.

“As a medical professional specializing in pediatrics for almost three decades, I can attest to the importance of receiving an annual flu vaccine to protect both the individual and our community. I urge everyone to practice preventive health care — get good sleep, take a walk, socialize, eat well, and prioritize getting their annual flu vaccine,” said **River Valley Health pediatric medical provider Christine Kavanagh**.

Respiratory viruses, such as the flu, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), and COVID-19, share similar symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, a runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, chills, and fatigue.

For residents at higher risk of more severe illness due to age or health status, it is recommended that they visit a health care provider and get tested early to be eligible for antiviral medications. If started early in the illness course, these respiratory virus medications ease symptoms, shorten the length of a viral infection, and reduce the risk of severe health outcomes.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health provides weekly updates throughout the respiratory virus season on its [respiratory virus dashboard](#) to keep residents informed.

###