



Pennsylvania
Department of Health



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, October 5, 2026

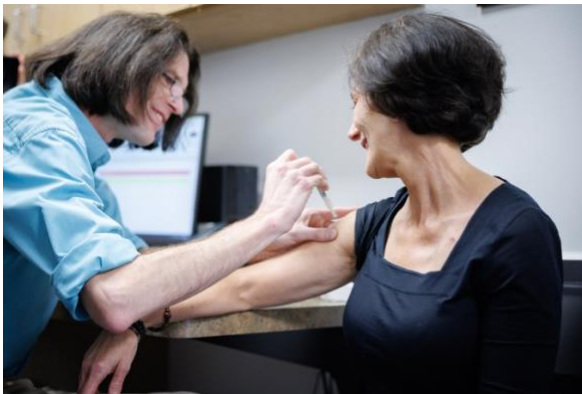
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Shapiro Administration Reminds Pennsylvanians of Benefits of Updated COVID-19, Flu Vaccines as Respiratory Virus Season Begins

Getting an updated annual COVID-19 and flu vaccine can protect Pennsylvanians from serious illness and even death.

Updated vaccines are covered by most insurance plans with no out-of-pocket cost.

Uninsured or underinsured Pennsylvanians can get the COVID-19 or flu vaccine at local State Health Centers, county and municipal health departments, and Federally Qualified Health Centers.



Pittsburgh, PA – To showcase the wide availability and importance of receiving updated vaccines for COVID-19 and flu as respiratory virus season begins, **Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen** and **Secretary of Human Services Dr. Val Arkoosh** visited **Hilltop Pharmacy** in Pittsburgh today.

During the event, Secretaries Bogen and Arkoosh each received a COVID-19 vaccine.

“Vaccinations remain an essential way to protect ourselves and our neighbors. As we approach respiratory virus season, Pennsylvanians can boost their body’s defenses by getting their age-appropriate COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccinations,” said **Dr. Bogen**.

“With COVID-19 vaccines now available for everyone six months and older, keeping your immunizations current is the best way to shield yourself and your community from severe respiratory illness this winter. I look forward to getting my updated flu vaccination in a couple of weeks.”

The COVID-19 and flu vaccines have been updated to protect against current virus variants circulating in Pennsylvania, and nationwide. Health care providers recommend the COVID-19 and flu vaccines for people six months and older. Vaccinations are 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.

“Vaccinations are one of the most effective tools available to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities from preventable diseases and the dangerous, often lifelong or fatal effects they can have,” **said Dr. Arkoosh**. “Pennsylvanians should talk with knowledgeable professionals like their doctor or the experts at their local pharmacy if they have questions about the COVID vaccine and other vaccines they might benefit from this season. And if they do need health care for themselves or their family, they can check with our team here at PA DHS to see if they qualify for Medicaid or CHIP.”

Pennsylvania’s Medicaid program and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide access to safe, effective vaccinations, including the COVID-19 and flu vaccines, at no out-of-pocket cost.

Approximately three million Pennsylvanians – or 1 in 4 people – get their health care coverage through Medicaid and CHIP in Pennsylvania. With this coverage, people can see a doctor, get vaccines, fill prescriptions, and access preventive services like health screenings. This coverage is vital to helping people stay healthy, take care of their families, and contribute to our economy. PA DHS encourages Pennsylvanians who need health coverage or other benefits to apply at any time at www.dhs.pa.gov/COMPASS.

To ensure Pennsylvanians continue to have access to vaccinations, including the COVID-19 and flu vaccines, **Governor Josh Shapiro** signed [Executive Order 2025-02](#) to establish a state-based safety net to protect children’s access to vaccines, require all state agencies to align policies with trusted medical experts, and create a Vaccine Education Workgroup to strengthen public communication and combat misinformation.

Respiratory viruses, including 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 with higher risks of developing serious illness due to age or health status, it is recommended they visit a health care provider and get tested early. These individuals can be eligible for antiviral medications, which are available for the flu and COVID-19. These medications ease symptoms, shorten the length of a viral infection, and reduce the risk of serious health outcomes if addressed early.

The updated COVID-19 and flu vaccines are readily available without a prescription at no cost for people with insurance. For adults who are uninsured or underinsured, vaccines are available at low or no cost through local health centers.

For children who are insured through Medicaid, are uninsured or underinsured, routine childhood immunizations are available at no cost through the many health care

providers that participate in the [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) Program](#) and at [State Health Centers](#).

Based on preliminary data from the [2025-2026 respiratory virus season](#), 13,175 Pennsylvania adults, and 1,209 children, were admitted to hospitals due to COVID-19. During that same timeframe, 598 COVID-19-related deaths occurred in Pennsylvania.

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

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Editor's Note: Video downloads and photos from the news conference at Hilltop Pharmacy are [available on PAcast](#).