



NEWS RELEASE

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IDPH Endorses CDC Recommendation for COVID-19 Shots that Target Current Strains

Guidance is Issued as Data Indicates an Uptick in COVID-19 Hospitalizations in Recent Weeks in Illinois and the U.S.

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today endorsed the recommendation by the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for the newly FDA-approved COVID-19 shots for everyone over the age of 6 months. The federal agencies have given the green light for updated mRNA vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer that target the currently circulating strains of the COVID-19 virus.

Heading into the fall, IDPH is closely monitoring data on COVID-19 as well as other respiratory viruses including flu and RSV. The federal guidance comes as data indicates an uptick in COVID-19 hospitalizations in Illinois and the nation, with a seven percent increase statewide in the week ending September 2, the most recent period for which data is available. There are currently 12 Illinois counties at a medium level for COVID-19 hospitalizations according to the [CDC national dashboard](#), meaning they exceed ten new cases per 100,000 population in the last week.

The CDC recently launched a [new national respiratory virus dashboard](#) that allows the public to view the levels of COVID-19, flu and RSV in each state.

“Illinois now has a new tool to prepare our residents for the fall and winter respiratory season: an updated COVID-19 vaccine that targets current strains” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “I recommend the updated vaccine for everyone 6 months and older. These shots will help prevent hospitalizations and severe outcomes and are especially important for those who are over 65, immunocompromised, or have chronic medical conditions.”

Director Vohra noted that heading into the fall and winter virus seasons, there are vaccines available for the three respiratory viruses that were responsible for the most hospitalizations and last winter’s tripledemic of COVID-19, RSV, and flu.

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On Tuesday, the CDC advisory panel recommended the new COVID-19 vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer for everyone over the age of 6 months. The FDA has provided full approval for the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines for ages 12 and over. It issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the vaccines for age groups from 5 months to 11 years old.

The former versions of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are no longer authorized and may no longer be used for what was once considered the primary series, or as booster shots. Those who have never received previous COVID-19 vaccination, are also eligible for the updated shots.

These newly approved shots are considered safe when given at the same time as other vaccines for the flu and RSV.

Studies have consistently shown that COVID-19 vaccines lower the risk of getting symptomatic COVID-19 and improve protection against serious illness, hospitalization, and death. Most Americans can still get a COVID-19 vaccine for free. For people with health insurance, most plans will cover the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost. People who don't have health insurance or with health plans that do not cover the cost can get a free vaccine from their local health centers and pharmacies.

For those who are uninsured or under-insured, the CDC this summer launched the [Bridge Access Program](#) that will cover the cost of COVID-19 vaccines this fall. The [Vaccines for Children Program](#) will cover vaccines for eligible children.

In June, ACIP recommended use of a single dose of RSV vaccine for persons 60 years of age and older. In August, ACIP also recommended a new preventive treatment for RSV for infants under 8 months, a new monoclonal antibody shot. Data showed that the treatment was highly effective, reducing hospitalizations in the age group by 77 percent.

For treatment, Illinoisans who experience Covid-19 symptoms can access no cost-share telehealth services through the [SIU School of Medicine Covid Test to Treat](#) services or call (217) 545-5100.

Illinois has more than 200,000 courses of effective therapeutic medications, including Paxlovid and Molnupiravir, available through providers and pharmacies that will continue to be provided free of charge until supplies run out.

Additional resources and COVID-19 data can be found at <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19.html>.

The federal government has established a website that provides an all-purpose toolkit with information on how to obtain masks, treatment, vaccines and testing resources for all areas of the country at: <https://www.covid.gov/>.