



## Should you get the updated COVID-19 vaccine?

One of the most common questions I get from people who visit my pharmacy is whether they should get the updated COVID-19 vaccine. Almost always, my answer is a strong yes.

Why? The biggest reason is that COVID-19 isn't done with us. Tens of thousands of people are [still being hospitalized](#) or sent to the ICU because of the virus every week, and we are still seeing [hundreds of people die weekly from COVID-19](#). Their families will tell you how real this virus is.

The FDA and the CDC have approved vaccine updates to protect against the [COVID-19 variants that dominate the country today](#). The benefits of the earlier vaccines that you probably received are wearing off. It's time to update your COVID-19 immunity.

Who should get the updated vaccine? Anyone [age 6 months or older](#). If you are immune-compromised or have an underlying medical condition, or are over 65 years old, you should go to the head of the line. People in these groups are [more likely to develop serious illness](#) when they get infected with COVID-19. Additionally, if you will travel soon, that's another good reason to get vaccinated.

A note about kids: While it's true they become ill from COVID-19 at a lower rate than adults, half of the children who have died from COVID-19 [had no underlying health conditions](#). There was no way to predict they would get struck by proverbial lightning. No age group is immune.

If you've never been vaccinated against COVID-19, now is the time to do it. Adults and most children need only one dose and it will target what's prevalent today.

This year, I'm also getting questions about vaccines for two other respiratory illnesses: influenza and RSV.

You're likely familiar with the [flu vaccine](#). Pharmacies have been offering it annually for decades, and it offers the best protection against what can be a serious illness that can cause people to be hospitalized or die.



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You can get the COVID-19 shot and the flu shot during the same visit. It's more convenient, and [researchers have found no significant increase in side effects](#) from getting both shots on the same day.

There's a third respiratory illness to watch for: [RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus](#). Its symptoms are similar to influenza. Last fall, children under 5 years old were hospitalized at twice the rate of previous season peaks. RSV can lead to hospitalization and in rare cases, even death. Very young children, pregnant women, and older adults are at the highest risk for RSV.

Fortunately, [two RSV vaccines for older adults](#) have been approved in the past year and are available this fall. Additionally, an RSV treatment called [Beyfortus was recently approved for infants](#) in their first RSV season. In clinical trials, Beyfortus reduced risk of infection in babies by 70%.

Admittedly, all of this is a lot to think about. Fortunately, there are multiple effective ways to reduce your risk of serious illness from respiratory infections. If you're unsure what you should do, talk to your pharmacist, physician, or other health care provider. They're up to date on all the latest research and can recommend the best course of action for you and your family.

