

**Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):
Flu and COVID-19 Vaccinations and Boosters – Holiday Guidance
ODP Announcement 22-118**

AUDIENCE:

All interested Parties

PURPOSE:

To remind Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) providers of the expectation to support individuals to access all available and recommended vaccinations and promote health and safety by providing helpful reminders about holiday gatherings.

DISCUSSION:

As the holiday season approaches, remember to protect yourself and others by staying up to date with your COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

You may be eligible to receive your flu vaccine at the same time as a recommended COVID-19 vaccine. Your healthcare practitioner, including your pharmacist, can help you determine if it is appropriate to receive both vaccines at the same time.

Flu Vaccine

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend that everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine every flu season with rare exceptions. Vaccination is particularly important for people

who are at higher risk of serious [complications from influenza](#). A full listing of [people at higher risk of developing Flu-related complications](#) is available.

COVID-19 Vaccine

ODP expects that providers will ensure that all individuals supported have timely opportunities to remain up to date with COVID-19 vaccination as defined by the CDC. This not only protects individuals' health, safety, and welfare – it also supports individuals to make choices about when, where, and how to receive needed services in accordance with § 6100.182(k). Providers are reminded of the need to offer vaccination opportunities in a language and means of communication understood by the individual or a person designated by the individual as specified at § 6100.50.

Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccination is important for maximum protection. A person is **up to date** with their COVID-19 vaccines if they have completed a COVID-19 vaccine primary series and received the most recent booster dose recommended for them by the CDC.

A person is still up to date if they receive all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended for them and then become ill with COVID-19. They do not need to be immediately revaccinated or receive an additional booster.

The CDC recommends that people ages 5 years and older receive one updated (bivalent) booster if it has been at least 2 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose, whether that was:

- Their final primary series dose, or
- An original (monovalent) booster

People who have gotten more than one original (monovalent) booster are also recommended to get an updated (bivalent) booster.

Updated (bivalent) boosters became available on:

- **September 2, 2022**, for people 12 years of age and older
- **October 12, 2022**, for people aged 5–11

Your healthcare practitioner, including your pharmacist, can help you determine if you are up to date with your vaccines.

Help Stop the Spread This Holiday Season

This may be the first holiday season that some people have decided to gather with loved ones since the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic.

If you're planning to travel or gather with loved ones this holiday season, here are two main recommendations to maximize your chances of staying safe and healthy from COVID-19.

- **Get Vaccinated**
 - Use the [vaccine provider map](#) to locate a provider near you who has the vaccine. Contact the provider of your choice to coordinate vaccinations.
 - If you are unable to locate a vaccine provider that can support you appropriately, please contact ra-pwodpemrgncysprq@pa.gov.
 - To support individuals in making an informed decision on receiving vaccines, these [social stories](#) provide a visual explanation of what to expect when getting the vaccine for COVID-19 and what you may experience afterwards. The social

stories are provided in both English and Spanish and have also been developed into videos.

- **Practice Healthy Habits**
 - Healthy habits are things such as washing your hands, keeping your physical distance from others, wearing a mask, not touching your face, and making sure surfaces are clean.
 - These [resources](#) are provided to support situations when it is necessary to teach infection control skills or provide information about COVID-19.

Wash Your Hands

- In these [two videos](#), Milestone HCQU West provides tips and tools on when to wash hands to help prevent the spread of germs.
- Washing your hands is one of the most important steps you can take in staying healthy. When you wash, make sure you follow these steps:
 - Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations.
 - Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
 - Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Keep Your Physical Distance

- It's important to keep a safe space between yourself and people who are not from your household. To practice social or physical distancing, stay at least 6 feet from people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces. Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Consider limiting the gathering to those within your household.
- If gathering with those outside your household:
 - Hold events outdoors when possible. Garages, decks, porches, backyards, and other outdoor spaces are the safest options.
 - If gathering indoors, open windows and use fans to provide better ventilation.

Wear a Mask

- If you are not fully vaccinated or if you have a weakened immune system, wear a mask indoors. If you are fully vaccinated, wear a mask indoors in areas with substantial or high COVID-19 transmission.

- When you see someone not wearing a mask it may make you feel lots of different emotions. You may be confused, scared, worried, or even mad. [This information](#) covers situations where you know the individual who is not wearing a mask well, or if the person not wearing a mask is a stranger. Knowing what to do may help reduce anxiety.

Don't Touch Your Face

- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Clean Surfaces

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces — especially when someone is ill.

Other Ways to Celebrate

If you are not ready to travel or gather with loved ones from outside of your household this holiday season that is OK. Making sure that you find alternate ways to celebrate the holidays is still important.

- [Send a care package or letter.](#) Show your friends and family that you are thankful for them by sending them a letter or a care package full of their favorite treats. It's the thought that counts!
- [Connect virtually.](#) While you might not be together in person, that doesn't mean you can't still connect with your loved ones. Exchange recipes, have a virtual bake-off, or digital dinner with loved ones from outside of your household. Arrange a time to join

a virtual call to swap recipes, get baking, or enjoy a meal together (just bring your device to the table!).

- Game time! Try out virtual or outdoor games to get your competitive juices flowing. There are endless virtual game options available or, keep it simple with a good-old fashioned game of charades over a video call. Search for “online games to play with friends” for some new ideas.
- Give back! Volunteering opportunities may be more difficult to do safely in person this year, but there are many safe alternatives that you can try. Consider donating to a food bank, volunteering to go grocery shopping for people who may need help, donating blood, or checking out virtual volunteering options.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Flu \(pa.gov\)](#)

[Who Needs a Flu Vaccine | CDC](#)

[Flu Symptoms & Complications | CDC](#)

[People at Higher Risk of Flu Complications | CDC](#)

[Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters | CDC](#)

[Vaccines.gov - Find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you](#)

[Coronavirus in Pennsylvania \(pa.gov\)](#)

QUESTIONS:

Questions about this announcement may be directed to: ra-pwodpemergncysprg@pa.gov.