

# Staying Healthy During Respiratory Illness Season

*\*Information is current as of September 15, 2023*

With colder weather approaching and as we start spending more time indoors, respiratory illness such as COVID-19, influenza (flu), colds and RSV are set to increase.

## Take Action to Stay Healthy This Fall and Winter

Layering protections can help you avoid getting and spreading respiratory illnesses:

- **Stay up-to-date with vaccinations**, including seasonal flu vaccines and COVID-19.
- **Stay home** when you feel sick.
- **Masking** reduces the spread of illness. When hospitalizations are on the rise, consider wearing a mask in crowded public places—especially if you or someone in your household is at higher risk of severe illness. Wear a mask if you have symptoms.
- **Ventilate** and clean indoor air at home: run fans, open windows and/or use air purifiers such as HEPA filters.
- **Wash or sanitize your hands** often and well.
- **Cough and sneeze into your elbow.**
- **If you are higher risk, know what to do if you get sick**, you may benefit from antiviral treatments for the flu and COVID-19. These medications work best if you can start them as soon as possible after noticing symptoms.

If you are pregnant or have recently given birth, older than 60 years of age, and/or have health conditions, or you are not up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines, you may be at higher risk. Talk to your doctor about how you can access these medications.



Antiviral medications are available for people who have COVID-19 (even if mild) who are at higher risk of severe illness and hospitalization. Most treatments must be taken within the first 5 days of your symptoms starting. Use this [screening tool](#) from the Ministry of Health to see if you are eligible for antiviral treatments. These treatments are cost-free to anyone with a prescription.

You can use the screening tool even if you do not have symptoms, to be prepared, in case you get sick. The tool will tell you how to access COVID-19 testing and receive a prescription for antiviral medication.

