

2023-24 Respiratory Illness Season Patient Resource

Are You at Higher Risk of Serious Complications from Respiratory Illnesses?

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

- If you are at higher risk, it is especially important to stay up-to-date with recommended vaccinations, including vaccines for flu and COVID-19. Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you (and family members you care for) should get other vaccines to prevent other serious illnesses such as pneumococcus and whooping cough.



- **Children under 5; it is highly recommended to get them vaccinated for COVID-19 and the flu** (as well as whooping cough) because they are at greater risk of severe complications from these respiratory illnesses.
 - **If you are pregnant, it is highly recommended that you get vaccinated for COVID-19 and the flu.** Vaccines are safe and effective during pregnancy and antibodies from vaccines are passed to the fetus and to your baby through breastmilk, providing protection to your newborn.
- Make a plan to prevent serious illness and know where you can go to seek timely care if you get sick. If you are at high risk of severe illness from respiratory illnesses, talk to your doctor about antiviral medications for flu or COVID-19. COVID-19 antivirals can also be prescribed by some pharmacists.
 - If possible, get some COVID-19 rapid tests to use in case you get sick.



If you are at higher risk and do get sick—don't delay getting medical attention.

Antiviral treatments are recommended for people at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and the flu. These medications must be started as soon as possible after you start feeling sick.

COVID-19 Antiviral Treatments

- If you are pregnant, older than 60 years of age, have other health conditions, or are not up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines, you may be at higher risk.
- Find out if you are eligible for COVID-19 antivirals. You can use this [screening tool](#) from the Ministry of Health to see if you are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 and may benefit from antiviral treatments.
- COVID-19 antiviral treatments must be started within the first **five or seven days** (depending on the treatment) after you start feeling sick.

Flu Antiviral Treatments

- When the flu is going around your community, antiviral treatment is recommended for individuals who are pregnant, children and adults with other health conditions, and adults aged 65 and older.
- The flu antiviral treatments work best if you can **start them within 48 hours of noticing symptoms**.

