



Pennsylvania
Department of Health



Pennsylvania
Insurance Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, October 23, 2025

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As Cold and Flu Season Approaches, Shapiro Administration Protects Access to COVID-19 Vaccine and Reminds Pennsylvanians to Consult Evidence-Based Guidance from Trusted Doctors and Experts

The Shapiro Administration continues to take decisive action to ensure Pennsylvanians and their doctors have clear, evidence-based information to make health care decisions.

Getting an updated COVID-19 vaccine can protect Pennsylvanians from serious illness and even death.

Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen and Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner Michael Humphreys visited **See-Right Pharmacy** in Harrisburg today to clear up any confusion caused by recent federal actions surrounding the safety, access, and availability of the COVID-19 vaccine in protecting Pennsylvanians during respiratory virus season.

During the event, Secretary Bogen and Commissioner Humphreys each received a COVID-19 vaccine.

“Vaccines for COVID-19 and the flu are readily available to everyone older than six months of age. The vaccines boost your body’s natural defenses against these viruses,” said **Dr. Bogen**. “As a physician, I strongly encourage all Pennsylvanians to stay up to date on their vaccinations to protect against severe illness from COVID-19, and flu before gathering with family and friends this holiday season.”

Today’s event marks the latest public health effort from the Shapiro Administration in continuing to take decisive action to ensure Pennsylvanians, and their doctors, have clear, evidence-based information to make informed health care decisions.

On October 1, 2025, [Governor Shapiro signed Executive Order 2025-02](#), which directs state agencies to safeguard vaccine access across Pennsylvania. The order calls for the creation of a state-based vaccine safety net for children, instructs agencies to align their policies with guidance from medical experts, and launches a [central vaccine portal](#).

The executive order also establishes a Vaccine Education Workgroup to improve communication and fight misinformation, protect Pennsylvanians of all ages, and strengthen Pennsylvania’s public health leadership.

Additionally, the executive order reinforces that recommended vaccines should remain covered under private insurance and Medicaid in Pennsylvania. This step ensures that whether someone has a state or private plan, their access to immunizations is protected and consistent.

This month, the **Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID)** [reaffirmed its expectations for insurers](#) to cover the COVID-19 vaccine and other important vaccines during the 2025–26 calendar years. COVID-19 vaccines and other recommended vaccines should be covered without copays, deductibles, or other costs, when administered by an in-network provider.

“Access to Covid-19 vaccines remains an effective tool to protect our communities and keep Pennsylvanians healthy,” said **Commissioner Humphreys**. “We want Pennsylvanians to know that health insurance plans will cover the recommended vaccine at no cost, so no one should face a financial barrier to getting protected.”

If any consumer has questions or issues with their insurance, such as a bill for a vaccine they should not have received, they may contact PID’s Consumer Services Bureau [online](#) or by phone at 1-877-881-6388.

BACKING THE SCIENCE

Following a confusing meeting of the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) in September that created mixed signals and resulted in new recommendations that could limit access to lifesaving vaccines, the Pennsylvania Department of Health issued [new vaccine guidance](#).

At Governor Shapiro’s request, within weeks, Pennsylvania’s State Board of Medicine, State Board of Nursing, and State Board of Osteopathic Medicine considered and all voted to endorse the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s new vaccine guidance, ensuring Pennsylvanians and their health care providers – doctors, primary care physicians, pharmacists, nurses and more – have clear, evidence-based information to protect themselves and their families.

By formally endorsing DOH’s issuance of guidance, the boards are giving clarity to doctors and the public, reinforcing patient protections, and ensuring continued access to vaccines across the Commonwealth.

“All community pharmacists are prepared and ready for the busy vaccination season,” said **Paul Bowers, PharmD, Pharmacy Manager of See-Right Pharmacy in Harrisburg**. “We want our patients to have the most protection possible from circulating respiratory viruses and vaccination is the best way to protect yourself. Pharmacists are some of the most accessible health care practitioners in the community, and we are ready to address any questions or concerns patients may have about any vaccinations, seasonal or otherwise. Be sure to call your local pharmacy beforehand to inquire which vaccines you may be eligible for.”

VACCINES ARE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE

Vaccines are vital for high-risk groups, including people 65 and older, people with certain medical conditions, and people at a higher risk of developing complications from respiratory illness.

Because of the actions taken by the Shapiro Administration, Pennsylvanians have access to the updated COVID-19 vaccine that is readily available without a prescription at no cost for people with insurance. For adults who are uninsured or underinsured, vaccines are available at low or no cost through [local health centers](#). For children who are insured through Medicaid, are uninsured or underinsured, routine childhood immunizations are available at no cost through the many health care providers that participate in the [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) Program](#) and at the [State Health Centers](#).

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), during just one week in September 2025, nearly 500 Pennsylvania adults, and 55 children, were admitted to hospitals due to COVID-19. During the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season, the CDC recorded 1,280 COVID-19-related deaths in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health provides weekly updates throughout the respiratory virus season on its [respiratory virus dashboard](#) to keep residents informed.

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Editor's Note: Video downloads and photos from the news conference at See-Right Pharmacy are [available on PAcast](#).