



Pennsylvania
Department of Health

Pennsylvania
Department of Aging

Pennsylvania
Insurance Department

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Shapiro Administration Highlights Science-Backed Evidence that Vaccines Prevent Illness, Encourages Pennsylvanians to Receive Flu Shot Ahead of the Holidays

Getting vaccinated before the holidays will help protect Pennsylvanians, and their loved ones, from serious illness as people gather for events

Governor Josh Shapiro's executive order protects Pennsylvanians' access to vaccines, and provides clear, evidence-based recommendations that families can rely on and trust while making their own health care decisions.

Dunmore, PA – Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen and Secretary of Aging Jason Kavulich visited **Bucktown Center** in Dunmore today to encourage Pennsylvanians to get their flu shot now to protect themselves and loved ones from severe flu illness as we approach the holidays.

The body's immune system typically takes two weeks to build protective antibodies against the flu and other respiratory viruses, making this a great time to get the flu vaccine before holiday gatherings begin.

"The holiday season is also respiratory virus season; as you attend social gatherings, we want you to share joy, not germs," said **Dr. Bogen**. "To protect yourself and your friends and family during the holidays from a serious case of the flu please get your flu vaccine. The flu vaccine reduces your risk of infection, hospitalization and death, and reduces your chance of spreading it to others. You can protect yourself and people in your community."

The flu vaccine is updated annually to protect against new virus variants. [Health care providers recommend](#) that all residents six months and older get vaccinated against the flu.

So far this respiratory virus season, which began in late September, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) has recorded 7,125 laboratory-confirmed cases, 239 adult hospital admissions, and 87 pediatric hospital admissions related to the flu. This is on par with the number of cases at this point in the past two flu seasons.

Older Pennsylvanians, ages 65 and older, are at increased risk of severe illness from the flu.

“As we enter the season of holiday gatherings and travel, now is the perfect time for older adults to get their yearly vaccinations,” said **Secretary Kavulich**. “These immunizations are still available just about everywhere, at your local pharmacy and health care providers. Getting vaccinated can provide peace of mind for older adults and their loved ones so they can share special moments in their homes and communities.”

Most insurance plans cover the flu vaccine at no cost, but for people who are uninsured or underinsured, the flu vaccine is available through local [State Health Centers](#) and [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#). For children who qualify, the flu vaccine and other routine childhood immunizations are available at no cost through the [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) Program](#).

“The Pennsylvania Insurance Department encourages all Pennsylvanians to receive the flu vaccine,” said **Pennsylvania Insurance Department Policy Director Caroline Boehm**. “All insured consumers can receive the flu vaccine at no cost, so long as they go to an in-network provider. The flu vaccine is the first line of defense in preventing severe illness or hospitalization, so Pennsylvanians should not forego this vaccination in fear of an unexpected charge. If you’re covered, so is the flu shot.”

Earlier this year, **Governor Josh Shapiro** [signed an Executive Order 2025-02](#) to protect Pennsylvanians’ access to life-saving, evidence-based, safe vaccinations and ensure families maintain the freedom to make their own informed health care decisions. While the federal government was sowing distrust and confusion, the Pennsylvania Department of Health released [new vaccine guidance](#) to provide health care professionals and residents with the trusted information they need to stay healthy.

The Executive Order also directs DOH to establish a state-based safety net to protect children’s access to vaccines, requires all state agencies to align policies with trusted medical experts, launches a [central online vaccine portal](#), and creates a vaccine education workgroup to strengthen public communication and combat misinformation. By providing clear, evidence-based recommendations, the Shapiro Administration is helping keep vaccines accessible and information aligned across health care systems to protect the health of all Pennsylvanians.

The flu vaccine is especially important for high-risk groups, including people 65 and older, people with certain medical conditions, and those at a higher risk of developing complications from respiratory illness.

Pennsylvanians now have the option to self-administer the flu vaccine with a nasal spray at home. [This FDA-approved nasal spray](#) can be delivered to your door after completing an online medical screening, offering a convenient way to get vaccinated without visiting a doctor's office or pharmacy. The nasal spray flu vaccine is available to eligible residents ages 2-49.

Respiratory viruses like flu, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), and COVID-19, share similar symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, a runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, chills, and fatigue. Contact your health care provider at the first signs of illness.

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 Bucktown Center are available on PAcast.