

# VACUNAS (VACCINES) UPDATE

*National Alliance for Hispanic Health*



## U.S. GOVERNMENT RELAUNCHES SENDING FREE AT-HOME COVID-19 TESTS



The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced they will [restart a program](#) that provides free COVID-19 at-home test kits to households through the U.S. Postal Service. At the end of September 2024, individuals will be able to visit [www.covid.gov/tests](http://www.covid.gov/tests) to order four free COVID-19 at-home tests for their household to prepare for the upcoming respiratory health season. It is important to check the expiration dates on the box of home tests as the [FDA has extended the expiration dates on certain authorized at-home COVID-19 tests](#). To do this check the name of the manufacturer of the test and the lot number printed on the box against the [list of FDA authorized at-home COVID-19 tests](#) to confirm if previously acquired tests have expired or if their expiration dates have been extended.

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## FDA APPROVES UPDATED 2024-2025 COVID-19 VACCINES FOR UPCOMING RESPIRATORY HEALTH SEASON

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved and granted emergency use authorization (EUA) to [updated mRNA COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna](#) and the [updated version of the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine](#) to better protect individuals against currently circulating COVID-19 variants. The [updated mRNA COVID-19 vaccines](#) include a monovalent (single) component targeting the KP.2 strain and are approved for everyone ages 6 months and older. The [updated Novavax COVID-19 vaccine](#) includes a monovalent (single) component that targets the JN.1

strain of the COVID-19 virus and is approved for use in individuals 12 years of age and older. This approval of the updated Novavax COVID-19 vaccine allows people 12 years and older the option to receive a protein-based non-mRNA updated COVID-19 vaccine.



## PREPARING FOR RESPIRATORY HEALTH SEASON

Everyone should prepare for the approaching respiratory health season, especially older adults and those at higher risk for severe disease; as COVID-19, flu, and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) are likely to circulate at the same time over the next few months. Health experts advise following [CDC guidelines](#) and talking with your healthcare providers about eligibility to receive vaccines for all three viruses that help protect against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) to find a pharmacy near you offering an updated COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals will need to contact their chosen pharmacy directly to confirm vaccine availability and schedule vaccination appointments.

**COVID-19:** While COVID-19 can cause a range of mild to severe symptoms in all ages, older adults, those who are immunocompromised, and those with underlying health conditions are all at higher risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19. **The CDC recommends** that everyone 6 months and older [stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines](#) by receiving an updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine whether or not they have ever previously been vaccinated. Those who have been recently infected with COVID-19 can delay getting a COVID-19 vaccine for three months, but they can also get it sooner if they have a higher risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19 or coming into contact with someone infected. CDC's definition of being up-to-date on the COVID-19 vaccination is available [online](#), and may be updated in the months ahead as CDC continues to monitor virus data.

**Flu:** Adults aged 65 years and older, individuals with underlying health conditions such as asthma, heart disease, and diabetes, and pregnant individuals are some of the groups at [higher risk](#) of flu complications. **The CDC recommends** that everyone 6 months and older, with rare exceptions, receive an updated 2024-2025 flu vaccine to help protect against severe influenza-related complications. Individuals should receive the flu vaccine in September and October, although anyone who does not receive their vaccine in those months can still obtain a flu vaccine throughout flu season. [National Influenza Vaccine Week](#) is the first week of December and is a good time to bring awareness of the flu shot to those who have not yet received it. More information on updated flu vaccines can be found [here](#).

**Respiratory Syncytial Virus:** [RSV](#) is a contagious respiratory virus that usually causes mild infections, but can cause serious illness in infants and older adults. **The CDC recommends** RSV vaccines for all adults ages 75 years and older, and for adults ages 60-74 years who are at increased risk of severe RSV complications, particularly those with certain chronic health conditions, such as lung or heart disease, or those living in nursing homes. **The RSV vaccine is not currently an annual vaccine, meaning people do not need to get a dose every year. If you have already received an RSV vaccine, you do not need another dose at this time.**



Eligible older adults should receive the RSV vaccine in late summer or early fall before RSV typically starts to spread in communities, although eligible individuals can still obtain an RSV vaccine at any time of the year. To protect infants from severe RSV complications, **the CDC recommends** either an RSV maternal vaccine (Pfizer Abrysvo) during September through January for pregnant individuals at weeks 32-36 of pregnancy, or an RSV monoclonal antibody immunization for infants younger than 8 months born during RSV season or entering their first RSV season, as well as some older babies at increased risk of severe illness. Most infants will likely only need protection from either the maternal RSV vaccine or antibody shot, but not both. Older adults, parents of infants, and pregnant individuals should talk with their healthcare providers about the CDC's RSV immunization recommendations to confirm their eligibility.

**More Information:** Visit [www.vacunashelp.org](http://www.vacunashelp.org) for more information and [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) to find a pharmacy near you offering COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines. Visit [www.vaccinateyourfamily.org/paying-for-vax/](http://www.vaccinateyourfamily.org/paying-for-vax/) to learn more about how to pay for vaccinations for yourself and your family members. Visit <https://testinglocator.cdc.gov/> to find free COVID-19 testing for those who are uninsured.

## CDC STUDY SHOWS EARLY FLU ANTIVIRAL TREATMENT DECREASES RISK OF DEATH

A [recent CDC study](#) published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* showed that delayed initiation of antiviral treatment was associated with higher risk of death in adults hospitalized with flu. The study reviewed data from 26,233 patients admitted to the hospital with severe flu including a diagnosis of pneumonia over seven flu seasons (2012-2019). The results showed patients who started antiviral treatment 2-5 days after hospital admission were 40% more likely to die within 30 days of hospital admission compared to patients who began antiviral treatment on the day of hospital admission. The results also showed that every additional day where antiviral treatment was delayed was associated with a greater percentage of patients who experienced other severe clinical outcomes, such as intensive care unit (ICU) admission and the need for advanced breathing support. [Health experts note](#) that these findings support the recommendation by CDC and the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) to begin flu antiviral treatment early for patients admitted to the hospital with suspected or confirmed influenza.

## NIH RECOVER INITIATIVE PUBLISHES RESEARCH ON LONG COVID

The National Institute of Health (NIH) [RECOVER initiative](#), which seeks to better understand the causes and treatments of Long COVID, recently published two studies giving more insight into the disease impacting an [estimated 17 million individuals](#) in the U.S. One of the [studies published in JAMA](#) is the first study to examine how Long COVID affects children (ages 6 to 11 years old) and adolescents (ages 12 to 17 years old). Among children, headache, trouble with memory or focus, trouble sleeping, and stomach pain were the most common symptoms. Adolescents' common symptoms were more similar to those in adults dealing with Long COVID. They tended to report more fatigue-related symptoms, such as daytime sleepiness or low energy, and body, muscle or joint pain. This age group was also more likely to experience changes in taste or smell. [Health experts note](#) that understanding the underlying mechanisms that may be related to these differences in Long COVID symptoms across age groups is crucial to developing future Long COVID treatments for children that are age-group specific.



The second study [published in the journal \*Annals of Internal Medicine\*](#) examined if a COVID-19 infection resulted in changes to routine blood biomarkers that may be predictive of Long COVID. Researchers examined lab results such as routine blood counts, kidney and liver test results, and inflammation markers in the body from more than 10,000 patients across the U.S. The results showed no significant differences in biomarkers between patients with Long Covid and those without the disease. [Health experts note](#) that these results show there isn't a specific laboratory value or routine blood test identified yet that can reliably diagnose Long COVID.

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