

Your guide to the 2025-2026 respiratory illness season (Broadcast)

INTRO:

ACROSS THE BOARD – LATE 2024 TO EARLY 2025 WAS RECOGNIZED AS A ROUGH RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON. THREE VIRUSES – FLU... R-S-V... AND COVID-19 WERE ALL HEAVILY CIRCULATING COMMUNITIES IN THE WINTER MONTHS... ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

TAKE VO

THIS PUTS A TREMENDOUS STRAIN ON THE ENTIRE MEDICAL SYSTEM FOR SO MANY PEOPLE TO ALL GET SICK AT ONCE. FROM A CLINIC SETTING TO AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT... AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN... AN INFLUX OF PATIENTS AT THE SAME TIME CAN IMPACT HOW QUICKLY PEOPLE CAN BE SEEN FOR OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS.

DR. BRIAN CURTIS – THE VICE PRESIDENT CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER FOR OSF MEDICAL GROUP – SAYS THE FLU STARTED CIRCULATING IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER... AND PEAKED IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY. R-S-V SPREAD WAS STRONGEST IN THE LATE WINTER... AS EXPECTED. COVID-19 WAS CIRCULATING THROUGH THE SAME TIME PERIOD.

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT THE UPCOMING SEASON? THAT'S STILL TO BE SEEN. BUT THERE ARE A FEW KEY FACTORS TO PAY ATTENTION TO... LIKE HOW EFFECTIVE THE FLU VACCINE IS. HOW MANY PEOPLE RECEIVE THE FLU VACCINE. HOW MANY HIGH-RISK PEOPLE GET THE ONE-TIME R-S-V VACCINE... AND HOW MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC RESPOND WHEN THEY ARE SICK. DR. CURTIS GIVES SOME ADVICE ON WHAT WE CAN BE DOING NOW TO TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES.

TAKE SOT | DR. BRIAN CURTIS | VICE PRESIDENT CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER | OSF MEDICAL GROUP

"The best thing you can do is take care of yourself and make sure your body is the healthiest it can be. That means prioritizing exercise, sleeping, eating right and limiting your intake of alcohol. Not taking care of your body can wear down your system and leave you susceptible to getting infections," Dr. Curtis says.

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FLU VACCINES ARE READY NOW... DR. CURTIS SAYS. HE RECOMMENDS GETTING THE VACCINE BEFORE THE END OF OCTOBER... BUT SAYS IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET IT. YOU CAN SCHEDULE AN OFFICE VISIT THROUGH OSF MYCHART TO RECEIVE A VACCINE AT ANY OSF MEDICAL GROUP PRIMARY CARE LOCATION... OR BY VISITING AN OSF ONCALL URGENT CARE OR OSF PROMPTCARE WALK-IN CLINIC. YOU CAN ALSO BE SEEN AT THESE LOCATIONS FOR SEVERE HEALTH CONCERNS... LIKE VIRAL ILLNESSES.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/SOUNDBITES

There are two one-time RSV vaccines. The adult vaccine, which is a vaccine in the traditional sense, for people who are high-risk. This is supposed to help train your immune system to recognize and fight off certain viruses or bacteria, without getting severely ill.

Those who can receive the shot include pregnant women (who are 32 to 36 weeks pregnant who will deliver during the RSV season), all people 65 and older, and those 50 and older who have serious health conditions such as chronic heart disease, chronic lung disease, severe diabetes and a weakened immune system.

The second vaccine is for very young kids, and it's a monoclonal antibody, which is a lab-made protein that works like natural antibodies and helps your body fight infections. It's called Beyfortus® (nirsevimab-alip). It's an injection for babies under 8 months of age entering their first RSV season.

If your child has serious health challenges like being on oxygen, having heart issues or lung issues, you might want to consider having your child receive nirsevimab into their second RSV season as well. But Dr. Curtis says to speak with your health care provider, as each situation can be unique.

Besides receiving your vaccines, hand washing, staying home when sick and covering your cough are three tips Dr. Curtis gives to not spread your germs to others. Last year, Dr. Curtis adds, people were returning to pre-pandemic behaviors such as returning to work in person while sick, which causes viruses to spread more rapidly.

Flu vaccine myth

Dr. Curtis advises it's never too late to receive your flu vaccine.

"If it's December or January and you haven't gotten it, you can still get it. It's still worthwhile and beneficial for you to do that. So don't think 'it's halfway through the season why bother now?' Flu doesn't care where it's in the season and it doesn't care who you are."

It's a myth to think that if you get your flu vaccine early, it won't protect you for the whole season. Dr. Curtis says that's just not true.

What mild symptoms look like (and what to do)

Most mild cases of respiratory illnesses like RSV, COVID-19, influenza and rhinovirus or enterovirus (common cold) can be taken care of in the comfort of your own home.

"That could be a low-grade fever, cough, congestion and body aches." Dr. Curtis advises, "Tylenol and Motrin can be used, if your health circumstances allow for it, and then drinking fluids and having plenty of rest is the care for that."

Seeking medical care from a health care professional, in any type of setting, is not needed for people with mild symptoms.

However, there are times when serious medical attention is required.

When it's time to be seen by a medical provider

- Trouble breathing
- Unable to keep liquids down
- Fever not responding to Tylenol or Motrin
- People not acting like themselves mentally
- Serious illness lasting more than 7 days with no signs of improvement

OSF OnCall offers virtual options for patients to get care 24/7 through its [Virtual Urgent Care](#). The appointment generally takes 5-10 minutes and gets sick patients a treatment plan within 30 minutes. No appointment is needed.