



IN THE KNOW

EDUCATION SESSION

Leaves Are Falling, Germs Are Calling:
Stay Healthy This Fall

September 23, 2025



IN THE KNOW

IDD EDUCATION RESOURCES

IN THE KNOW Education Series

Timely and Relevant Information and Resources Specific to and for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

Our In the Know education series is designed to educate and elevate awareness of timely and relevant topics impacting the quality of life for individuals with IDD.

Today's Topic: Stay Healthy this Fall



PRESENTER

Brittany Miske RN, AGNP-BC

VP of Healthcare Management & Clinical Support

Individuals at Increased Risk for Serious Illness



- **Multiple chronic conditions:**
 - Children with congenital heart disease or chronic lung disease.
 - Individuals with neuromuscular disorders, such as muscular dystrophy.
 - Adults with heart disease or lung disease.
 - Individuals with disabilities.
 - Individuals with poorly controlled diabetes.
- **Weakened immune systems:**
 - Immunosuppressant medications or treatments.
 - Chronic medical conditions
- **Young children or older adults.**
- **Pregnant individuals**

Ways to Prevent Illness



- Stay up to date with vaccines.
- Hand hygiene.
- Routinely clean & disinfect high touch surfaces.
- Limit close contact with people who are sick.
- Mask if able.
- Cover your cough.
- Cleaner air through opening windows for fresh air or air purifying units.
- Don't share drinkware or silverware.
- Stay hydrated.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Stay active.
- Manage stress.
- Stay well-rested.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose.

Cover your Cough



- **Masking**
- **Cough into your elbow or shoulder**
- **Cough into a tissue or hand**
 - Hand hygiene

Masking Considerations



- **Ensure safe masking:**
 - Well-fitted.
 - Does not cause difficulty with breathing.
 - The individual can remove the mask without assistance.
- For individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf, clear masks are an option to promote communication.

- **Wash your hands with soap and warm water or use hand sanitizer:**
 - Before & after eating
 - After going to a doctor's appointment
 - After using the bathroom or assisting your loved one with toileting
 - After coughing or sneezing
 - After running errands

Why should I consider vaccinating?



- **Reduces** your chances of severe illness and complications.
- **Reduces** risk of hospitalization.
- **Faster recovery** from illness.
- **Protects** your immunocompromised loved ones from illness.

Who should get vaccinated?



- Everyone 6 months and older should get a **flu** shot every year.
- Your need for a **COVID-19** shot can depend on your age, health, and past shots. Ask your doctor if you should get one.
- Older adults (age 75 and up) and some people between 60–74 years old should also get the **RSV** vaccine.
- Talk to your care manager to set up an appointment with your Primary Care Provider (PCP) or a local vaccination clinic.

When is the best time to get vaccinated?



- **The best time to get your flu shot is in October.**
- **But it's still helpful to get vaccinated anytime between August through April.**

How much is a vaccine going to cost?



- **Most insurances**, including Medicaid, **pay for vaccines**.
- If a loved one doesn't have insurance, they may be able to get **a free or low-cost shot at a clinic or pharmacy**.

Signs you may be getting sick



- Cough
- Fever/chills
- Sore/scratchy throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Change in appetite
- Trouble breathing
- GI upset
- Body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Change in taste or smell

Management of Symptoms



- **Stay home and rest**
- **Over-the-counter medications**
 - Cold medicines
 - Saline nasal spray for congestion management
 - Vitamin C/Zinc supplement
 - Topical cough suppressants
 - Tylenol, Motrin, or ibuprofen for fever/ body aches
 - Limit total Tylenol to 3,000 mg or 3 g in 24 hours for fever
- **Encourage/administer fluids**
- **Oral antiviral agents ASAP**
- **Inhalers/nebulizers**

When to call your doctor / PCP



- Symptoms get worse or do not improve
- Persistent fever or fever returns after being fever-free
- Shortness of breath
- Cyanosis- “Blue skin”
- Wheezing
- Chest pain
- Severe headaches
- Poor oral intake

- **All flu shots protect against the three most common types of flu virus.**
- **Nasal spray flu vaccine (FluMist) is available for people ages 2–49**
 - Caregivers may be able to give it at home – no needle!
- **People with egg allergies can still get the flu shot**
 - Talk to your doctor about the right type for you
- **Some people can get flu and COVID-19 shots together in one trip**
 - Talk to your doctor to see if this option is right for you

Questions?



References



- CDC. (2024a). *Healthy habits to prevent flu*. Influenza (Flu). https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevention/actions-prevent-flu.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fflu%2Fprevent%2Factions-prevent-flu.htm
- CDC. (2024b). *Respiratory viruses and people with disabilities*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/risk-factors/people-with-disabilities.html>
- Mayo Clinic Staff. (2023). *Common cold*. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/symptoms-causes/syc-20351605>