

Health Update: November 10

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health released the following press release on Tuesday.

Massachusetts Public Health Officials Urge Residents to Get Vaccinated Ahead of the Holiday Season

BOSTON (November 7, 2023) – As the weather gets colder and with holiday gatherings just around the corner, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) urges residents to get vaccinated.

"With Thanksgiving just two weeks away, now is a great time for those preparing to celebrate with friends and loved ones to get vaccinated for flu, COVID-19, and RSV, if eligible. Getting vaccinated now will maximize protection against these respiratory viruses," said Public Health Commissioner Robert Goldstein, MD, PhD. We want Massachusetts residents to have a safe, healthy, and fun holiday season and part of that is getting vaccinated to protect yourself and those around you."

Everyone 6 months and older should get a seasonal flu vaccine and an updated COVID-19 vaccine, both of which can take up to two weeks to take full effect to protect against infection, serious illness, and hospitalization, and reduce the chances of suffering the effects of [Long COVID](#). The updated COVID-19 vaccine is effective against current variants and widely available for little or no cost to Massachusetts residents. Vaccine location information is available at mass.gov/Covid Vaccine. Residents who cannot get to a vaccination location can schedule an appointment for in-home COVID and flu vaccination by going to mass.gov/VaccinesAtHome or calling 833-983-0485.

DPH is working with hospitals and providers to encourage vaccination of staff and patients. Through its [Vaccine Equity Initiative](#), DPH is working closely with communities of color and other populations and communities hardest-hit by COVID-19 to improve access to vaccination. Through partnerships with community organizations, DPH will hold COVID-19 and flu clinics in many community locations and at upcoming cultural events. A listing of these community clinics that are accepting appointments and, in some locations, walk-ins, is updated weekly and can be found at mass.gov/MobileVax.

In addition to flu and COVID-19 vaccination, many people are eligible for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination this year, including pregnant people, newborns, and many people 60 and older. COVID-19, flu, and RSV are the three viruses that are most likely to cause severe disease resulting in hospitalization and sometimes death. While the holidays are a time for gathering, public health officials advise that if you are feeling unwell, you should stay home, get tested, and, if you test positive for flu or COVID-19, [get treatment](#) to [prevent the spread of illness](#).

"Adding vaccinations to your holiday season to-do list is one of the best gifts you can give yourself and people you'll gather with, especially older adults, people who are immunocompromised, and pregnant people, who are at higher risk for severe complications," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown. "While it's never too late to get your COVID or flu shots, getting vaccinated sooner rather than later will provide increased protection ahead of holiday celebrations, the start of winter, and peak respiratory disease season."

To make a flu and COVID-19 vaccine appointment, visit: www.vaccines.gov. Please let me know if you have any questions!

