

## IMMUNIZATION Update

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### Question of the Week

#### Are free COVID-19 tests still available?



It's going to be a challenge staying away from family and loved ones this holiday season. Even with the rise in flu cases and COVID-19 lingering, it's hard to avoid gathering. The Louisiana Immunization Program reminds people to take the proper precautions to avoid infection and, potentially, spreading it to others.

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. It is also recommended to receive the newly authorized bivalent COVID-19 booster in conjunction with the flu shot. For people who have already received both the flu shot and the updated COVID-19 booster, here are some additional protections against the flu and COVID-19:

- Wear a mask when possible.
- Frequently wash hands.
- Avoid large crowds.
- If you're exhibiting any cold-like symptoms stay home and/or self-isolate.
- Have guests take a preliminary COVID-19 test before gathering.

In addition to these precautions, if you believe you may have been infected with either the flu, COVID-19 or seasonal cold please strategize the best way to reduce contact with other individuals and self-isolate. Here are some ways to get a COVID-19 test:

- COVID-19 tests available at Parish Health Units
- Most health plans are covering up to eight tests per month
- Medicaid members can get up to eight tests within a 30-day period. That is eight FDA-authorized tests per member with or without a prescription

## What to do in the case of a COVID-19 exposure

If you were exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 or has been told by a healthcare provider or public health authority that you were exposed, here are steps you should take, regardless of your vaccination status or if you have had a previous infection.

- Wear a [mask](#) or respirator (e.g., N95) any time you are around others inside your home or indoors in public
- Take [extra precautions](#) if you will be around people who are [more likely to get very sick from COVID-19](#)
- Watch for [symptoms](#). If you develop symptoms, [isolate immediately](#) and [get tested](#)
- Get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure (even if you don't develop symptoms)
- If you test negative, continue taking precautions through day 10
- If you test positive, isolate immediately

Learn how COVID-19 spreads and the [factors that make the risk of spread higher or lower](#).

## Week 45 FluView report

Flu activity continues to increase across the country, with the highest levels of activity occurring in the southeast and south-central parts of the country, followed by the Mid-Atlantic and the south-central West Coast regions. Click below for key points summarizing FluView data and other relevant flu-related information.

In Louisiana, during Week 45:

- 9.13% of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI).

- This percentage is above the regional baseline of 3.9%.
- The ILI case definition changed starting with the 2021-2022 season: fever >100.3 AND cough and/or sore throat.

#### **Cumulative 2022-23 influenza vaccinations statewide:**

1. How many flu vaccines have been given so far this flu season 0-17yo? 97,514
2. How many flu vaccines have been given so far this flu season 18+? 514,525

#### FluView Report Week 45

**NOTE:** These key points are meant to support consistent messaging around influenza and can be shared with partners; however, they should not be posted in any public-facing web content.

## Vax matters podcast: Top vaccine myths



Be immune from misinformation with the Office of Public Health's Vax Matters podcast. Listen to the experts discuss all things vaccine, from smallpox to COVID-19. Even though we hear about vaccines every day, what do we know about them? The Vax Matters podcast provides listeners with the truths behind immunization from all angles.

The most recent episode (November 16) discusses the future of vaccines. You may not know now, but you will after listening to this special episode of Vax Matters.

Dr. Lisa Morici of the Tulane University School of Medicine joins us to illuminate the progress of vaccine discovery and development for the future. Episodes are available on most major podcast platforms. Click here to listen now: [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Stitcher](#), [Amazon](#), [Audible](#)

## CDC vaccine schedules app for healthcare providers

Healthcare providers who recommend or administer vaccines can immediately access all CDC-recommended immunization schedules and footnotes using the CDC Vaccine Schedules app. Optimized for tablets and useful on smartphones, the app shows child, adolescent, and adult vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices ([ACIP](#)).

The app visually mimics the printed schedules, which are reviewed and published annually. Users can identify the correct vaccine, dosage, and timing with 2 or 3 clicks. Any changes in the schedules will be released through app updates. This app is one of an expanding collection of applications from the CDC on a variety of topics, each optimized for your mobile device.

[Download the app here.](#)