CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Respiratory Illness FAQs

Updated 1/8/24

Protect yourself and others from Flu, COVID, and RSV

Respiratory viruses commonly cause illness such as flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), especially in the fall and winter. There are actions you can take to protect yourself and others. Learn about how to reduce your risk of getting sick from these viruses, and if they are spreading in your community.

If you have symptoms:
- Stay home
- Get tested
- Seek treatment

Tips for staying healthy this cold and flu season:
- Wash your hands before eating, or touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your hands after touching anyone who is sneezing, coughing or blowing their nose.
- Don't share things like towels, lipstick, toys, or anything else that might be contaminated with respiratory germs.
- Don't share food, utensils or beverage containers with others.
- Talk with your health care professional about the benefits of getting vaccinated to protect against flu, COVID and RSV so you can make the best decision for you and your family.

Flu

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Some people, such as people 65 years and older, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk of serious flu complications. There are two main types of influenza (flu) viruses: types A and B. The influenza A and B viruses that routinely spread in people (human influenza viruses) are responsible for seasonal flu epidemics each year.

The best way to reduce the risk of flu and its potentially serious complications is by getting vaccinated each year.

- Flu symptoms and diagnosis and FAQs: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/index.html
- Understanding how Flu spreads: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/spread.htm
- Symptom checker: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/index.html

COVID

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) is a disease caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2. It can be very contagious and spreads quickly. Over one million people have died from COVID-19 in the United States.

COVID-19 most often causes respiratory symptoms that can feel much like a cold, the flu, or pneumonia. COVID-19 may attack more than your lungs and respiratory system. Other parts of your body may also be affected by the disease. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill.

- COVID-19 symptoms: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html
- Order free test kits: https://www.covid.gov/tools-and-resources/resources/tests
- What to do if you were exposed: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html
- What to do if you test positive: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html
  This link can be used as best practice guidance from the CDC on isolating for Covid positive cases. This continues to be 5 days of isolation and subsequent 5 days of mask wearing. Here they offer a test out policy to remove mask wearing prior to day 10, but still recommend the 5 days of isolation. *Last updated May 11, 2023*
- View local hospitalization rates to understand how COVID is affecting our area:
  https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#maps_new-admissions-rate-county
  Hover cursor over Chautauqua County on the map. Updates Mondays and Fridays by 8 p.m. ET
- Employer Information:
  Paid Family Leave
  - https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/covid19
  - https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/new-york-paid-family-leave-covid-19-faqs
- Schools:
  - Guidance for day to day school operations for COVID-19 prevention strategies:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html
  - NYSED: https://www.nysed.gov/back-school/health-and-safety#2022-23-guidance
    Link refers back to CDC for guidance, stating "The New York State Education Department recommends that schools review current CDC school guidance(link is external) for COVID-19 prevention and work with their Local Health Department to implement effective and feasible public health measures. The New York State Education Department currently has no plans to issue additional specific school COVID-19 guidance"

RSV

Respiratory syncytial (sin-SISH-uhl) virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious. Infants and older adults are more likely to develop severe RSV and need hospitalization. If you are age 60 or older, a vaccine is available to protect you from severe RSV. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if it's right for you. If you are pregnant, you can get an RSV vaccine between 32–36 weeks of pregnancy to protect your infant after birth, or a preventive antibody can be given to your baby after birth.

- Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/about/prevention.html
- People at high risk for RSV infection: https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/high-risk/index.html
- RSV CDC Factsheet: RSV References and Resources | CDC
- RSV Symptoms: https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/about/symptoms.html

For more information on respiratory disease, please contact us at 716-753-4491 or email cchealth@chqgov.com.