

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:James.Leach@illinois.gov**KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:**

- IDPH Director Vohra visited DuPage County Health Department and received his annual flu and COVID shots
- The shots are safe and effective
- In September, IDPH issued updated immunization guidance for fall respiratory season

IDPH Director Gets Flu, COVID Shots During Visit to DuPage County Health Department

Message: if you're not fully protected from seasonal illness, now is a good time to do so

SPRINGFIELD – Dr. Sameer Vohra, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), received his annual flu and COVID-19 immunizations this fall respiratory season during a visit to the DuPage County Health Department this week. The Director also spoke on the importance of receiving these seasonal immunizations and the steps IDPH has taken to encourage Illinoisans to get their shots and to preserve access to them.

"I received my flu and COVID-19 vaccines to protect myself and those I love," said Director Vohra. "These vaccines are safe, effective, and remain one of the best tools we have to prevent serious illness. With the cold weather arriving and the holidays approaching, now is the time to act, especially since it takes about two weeks for vaccines to reach full protection. IDPH has issued updated guidance to ensure that everyone knows who should get vaccinated and where to access these shots. I urge all Illinoisans to take this important step to protect their health and the health of their families."

In September, IDPH issued updated immunization guidance for the fall respiratory season. Director Vohra also issued a standing order allowing Illinoisans who want those immunizations to be able to obtain them from pharmacies and other clinical settings. Under the guidance issued by IDPH:

- Flu vaccination is recommended for all people ages 6 months and older.
- RSV immunization is recommended for:
 - All pregnant people during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy.
 - All infants under the age of 8 months without maternal RSV vaccine protection entering their first RSV season.
 - Children ages 8 months through 19 months who are at increased [risk for severe RSV disease](#).
 - Adults ages 50 years through 74 years at increased [risk of severe RSV disease](#).
 - All adults ages 75 years and older.
- COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for:

- All children ages 6 months through 23 months.
- Children ages 2 years through 17 years who have at least one [underlying risk factor](#), who have weakened immune systems, who have never been previously vaccinated for COVID-19, who live in congregate settings or live in households with those at risk for severe COVID-19.
- Children ages 2 years through 17 years without underlying risk factors whose parents/guardians want them to get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- All pregnant people and those who are planning pregnancy, those who are postpartum (after pregnancy), or during lactation.
- All adults 18 years and older.

Last season, flu vaccination reduced the risk of hospitalization by up to 78% for children, COVID-19 vaccines cut hospitalizations among seniors nearly in half, and RSV protection prevented almost 90% of infant hospitalizations. These results underscore the life-saving importance of vaccination this fall.

Vaccines can be found through health care provider clinics, pharmacies, and local health departments. Publicly funded vaccines for children eligible for Medicaid or uninsured individuals can be found through IDPH's [Vaccine Locator Dashboard](#). IDPH is also working with local health departments and community partners to bring mobile vaccine clinics through CIMPAP.

So far this fall, according to IDPH's [Seasonal Respiratory Illness Dashboard](#), current respiratory illness activity statewide is "very low" overall, but RSV activity is increasing. Models from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predict that COVID-19 hospitalizations this fall and winter could be similar to or higher than last year, while flu rates are expected to be lower and RSV rates are likely to be similar to last year. The 2024-2025 flu season was a high-severity season and saw 280 pediatric flu deaths, the highest number reported in a non-pandemic flu season since child deaths became notifiable in 2004, highlighting the importance of vaccination. Learn more at [CDC's 2025-2026 Respiratory Disease Season Outlook](#).

The IDPH [Influenza Vaccination Coverage Dashboard](#) shows that so far this season, around 17 percent of Illinoisans had a reported flu shot by the end of October as compared to around 18 percent the same time last season.

IDPH also reminds Illinois residents that one of the best ways to reduce transmission of viruses is to stay home when you are sick to reduce spread to others. Anyone with respiratory symptoms – such as coughing, a runny nose, or fever – should try to self-isolate from others, unless they need to seek medical care. If you cannot self-isolate, wear a well-fitted mask around others.

IDPH also recommends that if you do get a viral illness, there are effective anti-viral treatments available for COVID-19 and the flu, but they must be started quickly.

For COVID-19, treatment must be started within 5 to 7 days after symptoms appear. Treatment is strongly recommended for those who are 65 years old or older or at higher risk for severe illness. Some Illinoisans may be eligible to access free oral COVID-19 treatment through the [Paxcess](#) and [MerckHelps](#) programs.

Antiviral treatments for flu are most effective when given within 48 hours of starting to feel ill. Older adults, young children, and those who are pregnant or have conditions like diabetes, asthma and heart disease are at



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increased risk for complications and should contact a healthcare provider to be assessed for the need for treatment as soon as possible.

In addition to Director Vohra's stop to get his own shots, IDPH has also put out information on its website and social media encouraging people to get the protection of seasonal immunizations. In recent years, the Department has also highlighted its ['Tis the Sneezein' campaign](#) of humorous video messages to remind the public of the benefits of getting those shots.

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