

Respiratory and medical microbiology & infectious disease societies encourage simple daily actions to prevent the spread of respiratory viral illnesses

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Ottawa, ON – The Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) and the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease (AMMI) Canada urge all eligible individuals to receive their annual influenza (i.e., the flu) vaccine and to get up to date with their SARS-CoV-2 (i.e., COVID-19) vaccine, in addition to taking simple daily actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viral illnesses this winter season.

Across Canada we are seeing a dramatic increase in respiratory viral infections including influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19.

“The situation in our hospitals and acute care facilities is becoming dire – this is true not only for our paediatric hospitals, but increasingly so for our adult hospitals and emergency departments. Patients with chronic respiratory conditions are at greatest risk of requiring urgent care and hospitalization”, says Dr. Richard Leigh, respirologist, and President of the Canadian Thoracic Society.

“We are currently under a triple threat from influenza A, RSV and COVID-19” says AMMI Canada President Dr. Deborah Yamamura, medical microbiologist, and infectious diseases physician. “The rate of influenza A has exceeded thresholds across Canada and continues to climb. We strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your family, and our most vulnerable populations by getting the annual vaccine against influenza and completing the COVID-19 vaccine series or recommended booster. Wearing masks at indoor settings and performing hand hygiene offer important protection to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.”

We encourage all people, to take these simple actions to help stop the spread of influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19:

- Stay up to date on vaccinations (talk to your physician, the public health unit in your area, or other health care provider if you have questions).
 - The COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for ages 6 months and older.
 - The influenza vaccine is recommended for ages 6 months of age and older.
- Wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask in crowded settings or areas with poor ventilation¹ – This can help reduce your risk of becoming sick and help protect others from being exposed to respiratory viruses.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or regularly clean hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and items at home, especially when someone in your home is sick.

¹ Consult Public Health Agency of Canada's website on the recommendations on the types and uses of face masks approved for use in Canada and on how to make your mask fit properly.

- Maintain good respiratory etiquette by covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

What to do if you are symptomatic:

- Stay home when feeling sick however, if you must go out wear a mask and practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette
- If you are symptomatic and eligible for early COVID treatments in your province, it is important to access COVID-19 testing and treatment early within the required time frame.
- Talk to your physician to see if you are eligible for empiric treatment with oseltamivir for the treatment of influenza

Consult the Government of Canada website for more information about [influenza](#) and the Canadian Paediatric Society website for information on [RSV](#).

CTS COVID-19 resources are available here: <https://cts-sct.ca/covid-19/>.

AMMI Canada influenza and COVID-19 resources are available here: <https://ammi.ca/en/resources/>

About the Canadian Thoracic Society

The Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) is Canada's national specialty society for respirology that brings together specialists, researchers, educators, and healthcare professionals working in respiratory, critical care, and sleep medicine. The CTS advances lung health by enhancing the ability of healthcare professionals through leadership, collaboration, research, learning and advocacy, and providing the best respiratory practices in Canada.

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About the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada

AMMI Canada is the national specialty association that represents physicians, clinical microbiologists and researchers specializing in the fields of medical microbiology and infectious diseases. Through promotion of the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of human infectious diseases and by our involvement in education, research, clinical practice and advocacy, AMMI Canada aims to serve and educate the public and also to enhance the career opportunities of its members through professional development and advocacy initiatives.

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