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**DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**
DIVISION OF PUBLIC AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.



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Technical Bulletin

Date: September 30, 2021

Topic: COVID-19, Influenza and RSV

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To: Public Health Authorities, Health Care Providers and Long-Term Care Facilities

Background:

Respiratory virus season typically begins in the fall and continues through the spring, with peak periods normally between December and February, but vary each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) along with laboratory data received by the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH), it is likely that COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) will be spreading at the same time and potentially at high rates and severity during the 2021-2022 respiratory virus season. Last influenza season was historically low nationwide due to precautions taken to prevent COVID-19. However, entering this influenza and respiratory virus season, many COVID-19 mitigation measures have been relaxed which is expected to result in increased respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. ¹

Symptoms and Transmission:

Many symptoms of COVID-19, influenza and RSV are similar and may include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/having chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Change in or loss of taste or smell, although this is more frequent with COVID-19.

All three respiratory viruses are spread from person-to-person among people who are in close contact with someone who is ill. The viruses are spread mainly by large and small particles that are expelled when people with the illness cough, sneeze or talk. These particles land in the mouths and noses of people who are in close proximity and may be inhaled into their lungs. Although most respiratory viruses are spread by inhalation it may also be possible for people to become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.^{2,3}

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2021-2022.htm>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/about/transmission.html>

Although these respiratory viruses are spread in similar ways, COVID-19 is thought to be more transmissible than influenza and RSV. While people of all ages are susceptible to RSV, infections in adults are typically less severe. Those at increased risk of severe disease include:

- Premature infants
- Infants 6 months of age and younger
- Young children with underlying medical conditions or compromised immune systems
- Older adults, especially those 65 years and older
- Adults with chronic heart or lung disease
- Adults with weakened immune systems

Testing:

The only way to determine if a person is infected with COVID-19, influenza and/or RSV is to perform testing. There are many testing options for these respiratory viruses which include laboratory based molecular tests and rapid point-of-care tests. There is also a combination molecular test available to test for COVID-19 and influenza simultaneously.⁴ It is also possible for individuals to be infected with more than one respiratory virus at the same time. Testing options for these respiratory viruses include the following:

COVID-19:

- <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/in-vitro-diagnostics-euas-molecular-diagnostic-tests-sars-cov-2>
- <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/in-vitro-diagnostics-euas-antigen-diagnostic-tests-sars-cov-2>

Influenza:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/table-testing-methods.htm>

RSV:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/clinical/index.html>

Isolation/Exclusion Timelines:

Every infectious disease has its own unique infectious period, transmissibility, and isolation period. Once laboratory identification has occurred to diagnose either COVID-19, influenza and/or RSV it is important for the infected person to remain isolated appropriately to protect others from also becoming ill.

- **COVID-19:** Any individual who tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of whether they are symptomatic and regardless of whether they are vaccinated, must isolate at home for 10 days. Day “0” for those with symptoms is the day that symptoms began. For those with asymptomatic infections, day “0” is the date of specimen collection for the positive test result. Some people with severe illness (e.g., requiring hospitalization, intensive care, or ventilation support) may produce replication-competent virus beyond 10 days that may warrant extending the duration of isolation and precautions for up to 20 days after symptom onset.
- **Influenza:** Any individual who tests positive for influenza must isolate at home until fever and/or vomiting are gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND they are well enough to participate in routine activities.

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>

- **RSV:** Any individual who tests positive for RSV must isolate at home until their fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND they are well enough to participate in routine activities.

Vaccination:

Currently there is no vaccine to protect against RSV. However, both COVID-19 and influenza vaccination are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against these respiratory viruses and their potentially serious complications. Getting vaccinated combined with other mitigation measures not only protects the individual and those in close contact with them, but also preserves our health care capacity by reducing the number of people that need medical attention related to complications.

- COVID-19 vaccines are available for those 12 years of age and older. Promotion of COVID-19 vaccine is crucial to ending the current pandemic. It is important to establish trust and confidence in the vaccine among patients. More information regarding COVID-19 vaccine can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html?s_cid=11626:cdc%20vaccine:sem.ga:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN.Grants:FY22
- Influenza vaccination is available for those aged 6 months and older and it is recommended to support personal health and protect the overall public health. CDC's seasonal influenza vaccination resources for health professionals can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/index.htm>

Questions:

For updated guidance, please review the DPBH Technical Bulletin [website](#) and Nevada's COVID-19 response [website](#) regularly. Email dpbhepi@health.nv.gov with questions.



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