



Caregiver News – 1/2023



Stay Healthy This Winter – COVID Lingers, Flu Season at Hand, and Germs are EVERYWHERE. Here's How You Can Reduce Your Risk

By: Jessical Migala

<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/members-only/member-benefits/2022/11/aarp-bulletin-issue-nov-2022.pdf>

If there's one thing we can agree on, it's that nearly three years of pandemic living has left us sick of sickness. But as sure as fall leads to winter, so will virus season soon be upon us. COVID-19 variants now out-number Tom Brady's Super Bowl wins, the flu's latest model is in the showroom, and more than 200 viruses lurking out there are capable of causing the common cold. Here's the thing: You have the power to reduce your risk of getting sick significantly.

What's important is to start taking the precautions you need today to reduce your risk of getting a cold, the flu and COVID, and make it through the winter healthy and safe. So we called up the experts and pressed them to answer some of your most common questions.

COVID seems much milder now. Do I still have to worry about it?

Yes. While the majority of Americans have gotten COVID at least once, the virus that causes it, SARS-CoV-2, continues to evolve and mutate, sending thousands of people to the hospital every day.

No one knows exactly where this bug is headed, says Panagis Galiatsatos, M.D., an assistant professor of pulmonary and critical care medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He's predicting more cases as the weather cools, with a potential wave of yet another subvariant of the omicron variant.

You already know the immune system weakens with age, making infections more precarious and recovery time longer. More than 75 percent of COVID deaths have been in those age 65 and over, a risk that increases if you have underlying medical conditions.

But there's another issue to keep in mind: A prolonged recovery time—and the bed rest that can go with it—puts you at an increased risk for a cadre of complications, from loss of muscle mass and strength to prolonged immobility and falls, leading to a potential downward spiral. That's true for COVID, the flu and even the common cold.

"Trying to fight your way back to where you were before can be a tremendous battle," says Magdalena Bednarczyk, M.D., section chief of geriatric medicine at Rush University Medical Center. "For a fit, younger adult, a common cold or the flu could be an inconvenience. For a frail older adult, it can literally knock them off their feet," she says.

Bottom line on COVID: It's still out there, it's serious, and it's not alone.

Should I get the new COVIDbooster? And if so, when?

For a person 65 and older, being up to date on your vaccinations reduces the likelihood of heading to the hospital by 94 percent. So yes, you want that booster.

And right now is the perfect time for it, assuming you've already had the initial vaccine. The recently introduced booster targets the most contagious of the omicron subvariants, so adding it to your previous vaccinations is like donning a full-body suit of immunity armor. And since it's also the right time of year to get your flu vaccine, you can combine them into one simple appointment.

I'm just getting over COVID. Should I wait to get the booster?

Yes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), you may consider waiting three months from the onset of symptoms (or a positive test) before getting the booster. That gives your immune system time to reset its own natural defenses before you add the additional protection of the vaccine. (If you experienced rebound COVID, wait until three months after the return of symptoms or a positive test.) However, if you suffer from chronic liver or lung disease, diabetes, heart problems or other health issues that put you at increased risk, consult your health care provider about vaccine timing, says Cameron Wolfe, M.D., an infectious disease specialist at the Duke University School of Medicine.



Like us on
Facebook

**Senior
Resources**
AGENCY ON AGING

This program is supported by Senior Resources – Agency on Aging with Title III funds made available under the Older American's Act.

19 Ohio Avenue, Suite 2 • Norwich, CT 06360 • www.SeniorResourcesEC.org
Phone 860.887.3561 • 800.690.6998 • Fax 860.886.4736

Will we ever stop needing these shots?

Maybe, but the more likely scenario is that COVID boosters become an annual routine. "The goal is to get into a pattern that's similar to the once-a-year flu shot, where companies can modify the vaccine to stay up to date on whatever variants are floating around at the time. Ideally, we are looking at a situation where they are combined with the flu shot to make it easy," Wolfe says. But we're not there yet because, unlike the flu, COVID is still a year-round threat.

How can I help my immune system naturally?

"There are no injections or vitamins that will produce a supercharged immune system," says infectious disease expert Lawrence Livornese, M.D., chairman of the department of medicine at Main Line Health System. "Not smoking, not drinking excessively, exercising regularly, preventive immunizations and following a healthy diet are your best bets."

That said, a recent study found our immune systems respond more vigorously to both COVID and flu vaccines if we perform 90 minutes of light- to moderate-intensity exercise about 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine—and there were no reported increases in side effects. While the study was small, it may make sense to plan a long walk or other light-intensity movement postvaccination.

Beyond vaccines, what's the latest thinking on protecting myself from COVID?

Galiatsatos recommends keeping two tools at your disposal: rapid tests and well-fitting masks. Testing ahead of holiday gatherings and after exposure can help identify infection so that you don't spread it to loved ones. And while you're probably sick of masks by now, he recommends wearing a tightly fitting one—those include N95, KN95 or KF94—if you're planning on being out in public for an hour or two, leisurely grocery shopping or taking public transportation. (A quick 10-minute grocery run? Slap on a disposable surgical mask and be on your way.)

With all this at-home testing, how do we know if COVID is increasing or not?

The increase in home testing is already baked into the CDC's estimates of COVID infection numbers, says David Cennimo, M.D., associate professor of medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. But for a truly accurate statistic, look at hospitalization rates. If the number is rising in your region, COVID is on the rise and your caution should be as well. Currently, it's holding steady nationwide. Hospitalizations spike in winter: The U.S. saw a peak of close to 155,000 people hospitalized in January 2022; the previous January, we hit nearly 135,000.

I've already had COVID once. Does that make me less likely to get it again?

Not fully. Think of COVID as like a supercharged common cold: Coming down with it once doesn't mean you can't get sick again. "The virus changes enough over time that the immune response you develop against one version is enough to protect against serious illness but not from developing another infection," says Steven Lawrence, M.D., Washington University infectious disease specialist at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. And every new infection brings new risk of complications—including long COVID.

What's the deal with COVID rebounds?

When President Biden tested positive over the summer, he was quick to receive the antiviral medication Paxlovid. He recovered, emerged from isolation and then, whoops, he tested positive again. It was back into isolation. This is called a rebound infection. These may occur in roughly 1 in 4 cases. Studies show that Paxlovid does not reduce the risk of rebound infections. But it does greatly reduce the risk of hospitalization and death.

"A leading hypothesis is that the rebound we're seeing is no different than stopping an antibiotic prematurely and allowing the microbe to come back. The antiviral killed off the amount needed to eliminate the infection but not all of the virus – so it grew back like a weed," Galiatsatos says. Importantly, though, it doesn't mean that the drug failed; it's still very effective in preventing serious illness when taken appropriately, Lawrence adds. That said, if your symptoms do come back, you'll have to start your five-day isolation all over again, according to CDC guidelines.

Should I ask for antivirals if I test positive for COVID?

Yes. "Early treatment with Paxlovid or Lagevrio [another antiviral] can keep individuals out of the hospital and minimize the risk of death," says Thomas Tsai, M.D., senior policy adviser for the White House COVID-19 Response Team. But getting the drugs into the hands of those who are most vulnerable is critical. "Historically, we've always seen underutilization of the treatments for our older populations. And this is why older individuals are often the most vulnerable groups," he points out. "Our older Americans are, once again, bearing the highest burden of severe outcomes from COVID-19, including higher rates of hospitalization and, unfortunately, death," Tsai says. Reach out to your doctor about antivirals if you suspect COVID.

I've heard of "flurona"—or getting sick with the coronavirus and the flu at the same time. Can that really happen?

In a study on nearly 7,000 people with COVID in the U.K., about 8 percent of them were sick with a second virus; about half of those cases involved the flu. Patients who had flurona were significantly more likely to require ventilation and to die in the hospital. That's another reason to get both the flu vaccine and the COVID booster this year.

The looming danger of the upcoming flu season has the CDC on alert, and this year its recommendation is that adults age 65-plus get the higher-dose or adjuvanted flu vaccines rather than the standard dose.

“The flu is a very serious illness in older people,” says Nina Blachman, M.D., geriatric medicine specialist and assistant professor of medicine at NYU Langone Health. One study in The New England Journal of Medicine found that older adults are six times more likely to suffer a heart attack in the seven days after catching the flu.

If I got really whacked by COVID, does that mean I'll be hit hard by the flu too?

Not necessarily. “Our immune systems are as unique as fingerprints,” Lawrence says. Overall, in the absence of another medical condition (lung disease, for example) that leaves you vulnerable to respiratory infections, your response to COVID doesn't predict how you'll handle the flu—and vice versa, he says.

Before you find yourself sidelined with fever, body aches, coughing and sneezing, make sure you're fully stocked up on these essentials.

YOUR GET HEALTHY KIT

COVID tests: Avoid the embarrassment of hacking while standing in line at the pharmacy buying COVID tests. Keep two or three rapid tests on hand to help you identify if your symptoms are related to COVID.

Masks: Whether you have COVID or not, protect yourself and those around you by wearing a mask. N95s, KN95s or KF94s are best.

Acetaminophen: Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the preferred fever reducer for fighting illnesses, says June McKoy, M.D., a geriatrician and professor of medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Ibuprofen is great for sprains and strains, but in older people it may cause elevated blood pressure, interfere with kidney function and cause gastrointestinal discomfort.

Thermometer: Fever can be a symptom of COVID-19 and the flu, but is less likely for the common cold. Having a thermometer on hand will arm you with important info if you need to call your doctor. Pro tip: Purchase a contact thermometer (one used on the forehead or in the mouth or armpit), as contactless forehead thermometers have been shown to miss the majority of fevers.

Pulse oximeter: This device, which clips to your fingertip, measures your blood oxygen saturation level and can indicate if your oxygen level is decreasing, necessitating medical intervention. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration warns that these monitors may be less accurate for people with darker skin tones, so talk to your doctor before getting one. If you're experiencing breathing problems, call your health care provider.

Throat lozenges: Stick with a plain, non-zinc throat lozenge, McKoy recommends. (Zinc can alter your sense of smell and taste for several days, she says.)

Cough syrup: Dextromethorphan (Robitussin) is a good option for quieting a pesky cough. “You don't want to get rid of a cough completely, as it serves a purpose to clear your airways,” McKoy notes.

Soup: Keep your soup shelf stocked with several varieties this winter and grab any can when the mood strikes. Soup is hydrating and can help speed the movement of mucus and lessen congestion.

IS IT....COVID, THE FLU OR A COLD?

It's likely COVID if...	It's likely THE FLU if...	It's likely A COLD if...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever or chills* • Sore throat and cough • Shortness of breath • Fatigue • Muscle aches • Headache • Loss of taste or smell • Runny or stuffy nose • Nausea or vomiting • Diarrhea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels as if you got hit by a truck suddenly • Fever and chills • Muscle aches • Sore throat and cough • Runny or stuffy nose • Headache • Fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes on slowly over two to three days • Runny or stuffy nose • Sneezing • Sore throat and cough • Watery eyes • Fever (rarely) • Nasal mucus that starts clear but turns to white, yellow or green after two to three days

Helping You Avoid Scams this Holiday Season

By: Stephen McGraw, Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Strategic and Digital Communications
<https://blog.ssa.gov/helping-you-avoid-scams-this-holiday-season/>

Social Security-related scams continue to be widespread, especially during the holidays. Criminals pretending to be from Social Security and other federal government agencies are tricking victims into sending money or sharing personal information. The scam tactics and scripts may vary, but the ultimate goal is to pressure victims to send money using methods such as gift cards or wire transfers.

This holiday season, protect yourself from scams. Be skeptical and cautious of unexpected calls or messages. Criminals are using the names of federal government officials and sending pictures of documents, evidence, federal employee credentials, and law enforcement credentials and badges, to try to prove their legitimacy. They may change the picture or use a different name, agency, or badge number, always with the intent to scam people out of money or personal information.

Ignore suspicious calls, texts or social media messages, emails, and letters.

We will **NEVER**:

- Send pictures of an employee's official federal government identification.
- Suspend your Social Security number.
- Threaten you with arrest or other legal action unless you immediately pay a fine or fee.
- Require payment by retail gift card, wire transfer, internet currency, or cash by mail.
- Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment.
- Send "official" letters or reports containing your personal information via email.

We only send automated emails and text messages if you have agreed to receive them from us and only in limited situations, including the following:

- When you have subscribed to receive updates and notifications by email or text.
- As part of our enhanced security when accessing your personal [my Social Security account](#).

If you owe money to us, you will receive a letter with payment options and appeal rights. We do not accept gift cards, wire transfers, internet or cryptocurrency, or cash by mail.

Report suspected Social Security-related scams — and other Social Security fraud — to our [Office of the Inspector General](#). Follow SSA's OIG on [Twitter @TheSSAOIG](#), [Facebook @SSA Office of the Inspector General](#), and [LinkedIn](#) for the latest information about Social Security-related scams. Please share this message with your family and friends — because scammers never take a holiday break.



FREE on Zoom!

Live Well with Diabetes!

Join this FREE 6- week workshop and learn how to better manage your ongoing health condition!

You will learn:

- What to eat
- Low and high blood sugar
- Guidelines for when you're sick
- Tips for dealing with stress
- How to set small and achievable goals



These are just some of the topics covered. We will meet via Zoom, once a week for six weeks. Each session is 2.5 hours.

Participants will need a computer, tablet or cell phone and a reliable internet connection.

Class size is limited, **so register early!!**

Tuesdays from 10 AM - 12:30 PM

January 10 - February 14, 2023

To register, call 860-887-3561 ext. 127 or

email Lori at lrygielski@seniorresourcesec.org



Materials will be sent directly to participants at no cost and include a Living a Healthy Life Book, instruction booklet, and exercise and relaxation CDs.



Sponsored by Senior Resources Agency on Aging, North Central Area Agency on Aging, Area Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, CT Department of Aging and Disability Services State Unit on Aging.

Take Control



Feel Better



Energize



Live



Enjoy

Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Groups

Groton Senior Center

102 Newtown Road, Groton
Tomi Stanley (860)441-6785 or TStanley@groton-ct.gov
2nd Monday of every month, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
www.alz.org to learn more about caregiver programs

Alzheimer's Association – CT Chapter

2nd Thursday of the month, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
Quinebaug Valley Senior Center
69 South Main Street, Brooklyn
Kathy Demers (860)377-6416 kdemers48@gmail.com
Jean Ann Moore (860)208-2673 jamorre@snet.net

Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging

Virtual Dementia Caregivers Support Group
Call (860)972-6338 and enter 19623# when prompted
Mondays at 10:00 a.m.
Tuesdays at 3:00 p.m.
Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.
Fridays at 2:00 p.m.
Questions email: Adrienne.DeVivo@hhchealth.org

Hartford Healthcare Windham Hospital

Alzheimer's Caregivers Group
3rd Wednesday of every month, 10:00 a.m.
Johnson Room, 3rd Floor, Windham Hospital
For information call: (860)456-6785

Chestelm Health and Rehabilitation Center

534 Town Street, Moodus
3rd Wednesday of the month, 4:00 p.m.
To register contact Marie Sola
(860)873-6555 or recreation@chestelm.com

Mind Matters, LLC

801 Poquonnock Road, Groton
2nd Tuesday of every month, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Contact: robin@mindmatters@gmail.com

Griswold Senior Center

Dementia Caretaker Support Group
Every 2 weeks on Thursdays via Zoom
To register call: (860) 376-2604

LiveWell Dementia Specialists

Virtual Meetings 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month: 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
<https://livewell.org/project/virtual-care-partner-support-group/>

Caregiver Support Groups

Mansfield Senior Center

303 Maple Road, Mansfield

Yamil Figueroa (860)487-9875 figueroay@mansfieldct.org

2nd Tuesday of each month, 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Quinebaug Valley Senior Center

69 South Main Street, Brooklyn

Kathy (860)377-6414 or Jean Ann (860)208-2673

2nd Thursday of the month, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

VNA Caregiver Support Group

Madison Senior Center

For information contact Amanda: (203)245-5627

29 Bradley Road, Madison

3rd Tuesday of the month, 11:00-12:30 p.m.

Proof of vaccination required for this activity at time of registration

Zoom Support Group

Every Wednesday 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

For information contact Molly: (203) 584-0051

Middlesex Health

2nd Wednesday of the month, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Please contact Joan Perkins, LCSW

(860)358-2037 or joan.perkins@midhosp.org

Lawrence and Memorial Hospital

L & M Hospital, Conference Room 3

1st Tuesday of the month, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Contact: Carol Vara, MSW or Mary Sweeney

(860)442-0711 x 2483 or x 2078

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Groups

Senior Resources Agency on Aging

Sally Huck, Caregiver Program Coordinator
(860)887-3561 x126
Rose City Senior Center
8 Mahan Drive, Norwich
Last Tuesday of each month, 9:00 a.m.

Eastern CT Area – Mansfield

Janit Romayko (860)569-1978, Call to Register
Big Y Mansfield, 141 Storrs Road, Mansfield Center
2nd Wednesday of each month, 9:15 a.m.

United Services - Kinship Support Group

Plainfield Area
Lori Bergstrom, Prevention Services Manager
(860)412-8665 lbergstrom@usmhs.org
United Services, 303 Putnam Road, Wauregan
2nd Tuesday of each month, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Bereavement Support Groups

Middlesex Hospital

Virtual/Online Session

Every 2 weeks on Tuesday, 5:30 – 7:00p.m.

Register online at <https://middlesexhealth.org/hospice-care/support-group-registration/support-group-registration>

The Estuary

Bereavement Group

Micaela Finnegan (860)388-1611 x204

Montville Senior Center

12 Maple Avenue, Uncasville

Every Friday, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Sign Up at (860)848-0422

Brian's Healing Hearts

Loss of Spouse or Partner Support Group

1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

2nd and 4th Wednesday

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

<https://brianshealinghearts.org/resources/grief-support-programs/>

or call (860)451-8354

Center for Hospice Care

Bereavement Counseling

227 Dunham Street, Norwich

(860)848-5699 Toll Free 1(877)654-4035

Day Kimball Healthcare

Evening Bereavement Group, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Day Bereavement Group 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Registration Required

Suzon Warner (860)928-0422 x7316

Parkinson's Disease Support Groups

Windham Hospital Family Healthcare Center

5 Founder Street, Willimantic, 2nd floor conference room

2nd Wednesday of every month, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

1 (855) HHC-HERE to Register

A support session for patients, family, and caregivers will be followed by
30 minutes of LSVT Loud activities

CT Parkinson's Disease Working Group

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

1055 Randolph Road, Middletown

3rd Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Most meetings are virtual at this time.

Call (860)704-9519

Email: martha.jaffe@cpwg.org

Day Kimball Healthcare

Parkinson's Disease Monthly Support Group

For information contact:

Victor Gregoire (860)774-6143

Hartford Healthcare

Parkinson's Living Room Online Support Group

4th Friday of the month, 1:00 p.m.

For information call (860)870-6385

<https://hartfordhealthcare.org/file%20library/services/pdfs/cfmcdc-pd-living-room-flyer.pdf>

Lawrence and Memorial Hospital

Windham Fall Estates, Activity Room, Groton

3rd Wednesday of the month, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Donna Weissman (860)536-1020

Diabetes Groups

Live Well with Diabetes

6-Week Workshop

Learn how to better manage your ongoing health condition.

To register contact Lori Rygielski

(860)887-3561 x 127 or lrygielski@seniorresourcesec.org

Hartford HealthCare Windham Hospital

Windham Hospital Diabetes Education Classroom

112 Mansfield Ave, Willimantic

1st Wednesday of every month, 1:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.

Call to register 1 (855) HHC-HERE

Lawrence and Memorial Hospital

Joslin Diabetes Center affiliate at L & M Hospital

For location and time contact: Joslin (860)444-3366

Substance Abuse Groups

Nar-Anon

"Steps" to Serenity" Support Group

For Information go to www.naranonctma.org

Or Contact (860)377-8309

Al-Anon

Al-Anon Face Alcoholism

For Information go to www.ctalanon.org

Or Contact 1 (888)825-2666



We earn \$5 for every \$100 in gift cards you buy!

It's as easy as...

Everyone buys groceries. Use Cash for Causes gift cards and help us raise money.

Did you know?
100 families spending just \$100 on groceries each week could raise \$26,000!

1

Senior Resources buys Cash for Causes gift cards at a **5% discount**

2

Sell the gift cards to you, your family & neighbors, civic groups & organizations, etc.

3

You get full face value and Senior Resources **keeps the profit!**

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Card Amount: \$50 \$100 Other: _____

If you would like to pay via credit card, please visit our website at
www.SeniorResourcesEC.org/about-us/pay-your-bill-online

Account Name: Your first and last name
 Invoice Number: Cash for Causes




Mail to: 19 Ohio Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360 - or - Contact: Erica (860) 887-3561 x 110



We hope you find this month's edition of our Caregiver of Children newsletter informative.

Senior Resources currently produces a monthly caregiver of children newsletter. We are looking for feedback on any ideas you may have for future editions.

Please contact Sally Huck with any ideas/suggestions or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list.

Sally Huck: SHuck@seniorresourcesec.org or 860 887-3561 x 126.

To read previous editions of this newsletter please visit:
www.SeniorResourcesEC.org/stay-informed/grandparent-newsletter