



STATE OF NEW JERSEY GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2022

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Murphy Administration Highlights Public Health Preparedness for Winter Months

Governor Murphy & Commissioner Persichilli Outline Efforts to Address Impact of Influenza, RSV and COVID-19; Encourage Residents to Take Precautions

TRENTON – With multiple respiratory viruses currently circulating throughout the state, the Murphy Administration continues to monitor the situation and support New Jersey’s public health system as the winter months approach. Residents are encouraged to take the necessary precautions to keep themselves and their loved ones healthy in advance of many upcoming holiday gatherings.

"My Administration remains vigilant in monitoring the viruses currently circulating here in New Jersey and will continue to offer support to our hospitals and health care providers as necessary," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "The data and tools now available to us and the ongoing investments we are making in our public health infrastructure have better prepared us to address the public health needs of our state. Particularly as we enter the winter months and holiday gatherings take place over the next few weeks, I encourage residents to help keep themselves and their communities safe by taking simple precautions of their own, from getting vaccinated to staying home if they are sick."

"The lessons we learned and the tools we developed during the past two-plus years of the COVID-19 pandemic, including improved surveillance mechanisms, have prepared us operationally in responding to this season’s uptick in respiratory viruses sending many of our residents to emergency departments across the state," **said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. "Being proactive in

staying healthy is a collective effort and we all need to play our part to avoid a surge that could strain our health care system early in the new year.”

The New Jersey Department of Health continues to use data reported by health care settings and local health departments to monitor hospital capacity and disease progression, including daily cases of COVID-19 and influenza throughout the state. The Department is also maintaining regular contact with hospital leaders to understand their capacity to treat patients – particularly in pediatric units, which are seeing greater numbers of children with Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV) this year.

The Administration is working daily to coordinate among New Jersey’s hospitals to ensure patients can access the care that they need. Through this collaboration, strategies are in place to divert new patients to other nearby hospitals and to adjust to staffing constraints. Waivers remain in place to enable flexibility while also ensuring strong standards of infection prevention and control in these settings. The New Jersey Department of Health stands ready to employ other strategies such as transferring out lower acuity patients to urgent care facilities or [federally qualified health centers](#) (FQHCs) if necessary.

Residents are also encouraged to access the tools available to them to help avoid infections and/or severe illness, including both the COVID-19 and flu vaccines. As of this past week, everyone six months of age and older is now [eligible](#) for the bivalent COVID-19 vaccinations that also target recently circulating Omicron subvariants. While 81.3% of New Jerseyans have completed their COVID-19 primary vaccination series, there has been minimal bivalent booster uptake. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also stated that this year’s flu vaccine appears to be a [good match](#) for the strains circulating at this time. [According to the](#) CDC National Immunization Survey, in New Jersey, only 25.1% of adults and 50% of children (six months to 17 years) have received the flu vaccine so far this season. There is no authorized vaccine against RSV.

Governor Murphy and Commissioner Persichilli urge residents to stay up-to-date on these important vaccines. Flu vaccines, which are often covered by insurers at little to no cost to individuals, can be found at pharmacies, health care provider offices, FQHCs, and [local health departments](#) (LHDs). The latter two sites may offer the flu vaccine at little to no cost for eligible uninsured/underinsured individuals. COVID-19 vaccines, which are free to everyone, can be found at the [NJ Vaccine Appointment Finder](#) or by calling the statewide COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center (855-568-0545).

Residents are also encouraged to take other steps to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. Commonsense measures include coughing/sneezing into their sleeve, washing their hands, staying home when sick, and wearing a mask if they or someone they are with is at high risk of severe illness. Individuals are also encouraged to get tested as soon as symptoms appear, and monitor CDC COVID-19 community levels to determine if any additional preventative measures should be taken based on personal needs. Free at-home test

kits are available from the [federal government](#) and testing is offered for free at certain [sites](#) around New Jersey.

Keeping children home from school and child care centers if they are feeling unwell is particularly important with the current impact RSV and flu are having on younger populations. If a child does become sick, parents and guardians are encouraged to contact the child's health care provider for any concerning or severe [symptoms](#), including difficulty breathing, limited fluid intake, or worsening symptoms.

Protecting the health of vulnerable populations, such as residents in long-term care facilities and seniors, remains a crucial focus of the Administration's ongoing efforts. COVID-19 cases are closely monitored in long-term care and other high-risk settings, and all staff are required to receive training in infection prevention and control measures such as proper use of personal protective equipment. The Department of Health continues to provide direct assistance as necessary, through support from Mission Critical Teams, Infection Control Assessment and Response (ICAR) teams, facility consultations, and recent [funding](#) to help train frontline health care personnel in these settings.

To address both current and future public health needs throughout the state, the Administration continues to invest both federal and State funds to improve the effectiveness and resiliency of New Jersey's public health infrastructure. [Recent investments](#) include a \$41.5 million grant program to improve county health department infrastructure and another \$75 million grant to be administered to eligible county, municipal and regional local health departments (LHDs) across the state.

An additional \$80.5 million from the CDC has also been awarded to the New Jersey Department of Health to help build, strengthen, and modernize New Jersey's public health infrastructure.