



Southeastern Idaho Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Southeastern Idaho Public Health Encourages Residents to Reduce the Risk of Severe Respiratory Illness

With the recent increase in respiratory illnesses spreading around southeast Idaho, Southeastern Idaho Public Health (SIPH) encourages residents to be mindful of the current situation for the remainder of the season.

Recently, cases have been increasing among influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19, throughout the state and southeast Idaho. The remainder of the respiratory season has the potential to be severe, especially for young children and older adults.

The good news is that there are easy actions everyone can take to stay healthy this season. SIPH recommends the following steps:

- Remain home if you are feeling ill. Even mild symptoms could be flu, RSV, COVID, or something else.
- Get tested:
 - Contact your primary healthcare providers to inquire about multi-panel respiratory virus testing to identify flu, RSV, COVID, and others.
 - Free rapid COVID tests: www.covid.gov/tests or 1-800-232-0233
 - <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/find-covid-19-testing-locations>
 - Most insurance companies will cover costs for some over the counter COVID tests. Contact your insurance provider for more information.
- Seek Treatment. If you're ill and suspect COVID, flu, or RSV, please seek treatment sooner than later. Seeking care early is important because some treatments for viral illnesses are most effective within a specific timeframe. If patients wait too long to check on symptoms, their treatment options could be limited.
- Improve ventilation and indoor air quality in your home:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/Improving-Ventilation-Home.html>
 - <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/air-cleaners-hvac-filters-and-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, and sneezing. Avoid touching your face, but if you must, wash your hands before and after. Use hand sanitizer if washing is not readily available.

- Cover your nose and mouth anytime you cough or sneeze, either into your elbow/sleeve or into a tissue that is disposed of.
- Know if you are high risk. It is especially important for older people, people with chronic health conditions, people who are pregnant, and young children to get vaccinated to prevent severe disease.
- Get vaccinated.
 - The updated Omicron COVID booster, also known as the bivalent booster, targets the Omicron variant, as well as the original 2020 virus. The Omicron boosters are available for ages six months and older. These improved vaccines are the best protection against severe symptoms of COVID and hospitalization.
 - Vaccinations (COVID or Influenza) are proven to be safe and effective in reducing illness and transmission. Your doctor can give you the flu shot and the COVID booster in the same visit.
 - Flu shots are vaccines that protect against the four influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the flu season. The flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor with flu by 40% to 60%.
 - There is no vaccine for RSV, but simple measures like regular hand washing and covering coughs can help.
- Consider [wearing a high-quality, well-fitting mask](#) when visiting crowded, indoor places for added protection or if you are visiting someone at increased risk for severe illness.

For more information regarding respiratory illness visit www.siphidaho.org or call your local public health office.

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