

Joe Lombardo  
Governor



Richard Whitley,  
MS  
Director



Cody Phinney,  
MPH  
Administrator

Ihsan Azzam,  
Ph.D., M.D.  
Chief Medical  
Officer

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## TECHNICAL BULLETIN

DATE: March 6, 2024

TOPIC: CDC Updated Respiratory Virus Guidance (including COVID-19)

CONTACT: Melissa Peek-Bullock, State Medical Epidemiologist, Office of State Epidemiology

TO: Health Care Providers and Local Health Authorities

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### BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

On March 1, 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published updated guidance for respiratory virus illnesses, which includes COVID-19, influenza and RSV, among other common viral respiratory illnesses. This updated guidance is not applicable to health care settings. CDC reports that the 2023-2024 fall and winter respiratory virus season — four years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic — provided ongoing evidence of the changing face of respiratory diseases. COVID-19 remains an important public health threat but it is no longer the emergency that it once was and its health impacts increasingly resemble those of other respiratory viral illnesses, including influenza and RSV. This reality enables CDC to provide updated guidance proportionate to the current level of risk posed by COVID-19 while balancing other critical health and societal needs. Key drivers and indicators of the reduction in threat from COVID-19 include:

- Due to the effectiveness of protective tools and high degree of population immunity, there are now fewer hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19.
- Protective tools, such as vaccines and treatments, that decrease risk of COVID-19 disease (particularly severe disease) are now widely available.
- There is a high degree of immunity in the population against COVID-19.

As the threat from COVID-19 becomes more similar to that of other common respiratory viruses, CDC is issuing respiratory virus guidance, rather than additional COVID-19 virus-specific guidance. This brings a unified, practical approach to addressing risk from a range of common respiratory viral illnesses, such as influenza and RSV, that have similar routes of transmission, and symptoms and similar prevention strategies. The updated guidance on steps to prevent spread when you are sick particularly reflects the key reality that many people with respiratory virus symptoms do not know the specific virus they are infected with. Importantly, states and countries that have already shortened recommended isolation times have not seen increased hospitalizations or deaths related to COVID-19. Although increasingly similar to other respiratory viruses, some differences remain, such as the risk of post-COVID conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> [Background for CDC's Updated Respiratory Virus Guidance | Respiratory Illnesses | CDC](#)

CDC will continue to evaluate available evidence to ensure the recommendations in the guidance provide the intended protection. This includes monitoring data to identify and model patterns in respiratory virus transmission, severity, hospitalizations, deaths, virus evolution, and Long COVID.

## CDC'S RESPIRATORY VIRUS GUIDANCE<sup>2,3</sup>

CDC's respiratory virus guidance is meant to provide practical recommendations and information to help people lower health risks posed by a range of common respiratory viral illnesses, including COVID-19, influenza and RSV. CDC recommends that all people use core prevention strategies. These are important steps people can take to protect themselves and others:

- Stay up to date with [immunizations](#).
- Practice good [hygiene](#), such as, covering your coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing your hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Take [steps for cleaner air](#). This can mean bringing in fresh outdoor air, purifying indoor air, or gathering outdoors. Virus particles do not build up in the air outdoors as much as they do indoors.
- [Stay home](#) and away from others if you have respiratory virus symptoms that aren't explained by another cause. These symptoms can include fever, chills, fatigue, cough, runny nose, and headache. The previously recommended five-day isolation period for COVID-19 is no longer in effect. People can return to normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, both of the following are true:
  - Symptoms are improving overall; *and*
  - You have been fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Persons with [risk factors for severe illness](#) should seek health care promptly for testing and/or [treatment](#).

Additional prevention strategies may also be taken, which include:

- [Masks](#)
- [Physical distancing](#)
- [Tests](#)

People may not be aware of the things that can make others more vulnerable to serious illness. CDC reports that using the core prevention strategies will provide a degree of protection regardless. If you are unsure about the health condition or risk status of those around you, the most protective option is choosing to use additional prevention strategies, such as masking, physical distancing and testing.

## Questions

For updated guidance, review [the Division of Public and Behavioral Health Technical Bulletin](#) web page regularly. Email [stateepi@health.nv.gov](mailto:stateepi@health.nv.gov) for other questions regarding the updated CDC guidance.



Cody Phinney, MPH  
Administrator  
Division of Public and Behavioral Health



Ihsan Azzam, Ph.D., M.D.  
Chief Medical Officer  
Division of Public and Behavioral Health

<sup>2</sup> [Respiratory Virus Guidance \(cdc.gov\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Preventing Respiratory Viruses | Respiratory Illnesses | CDC](#)