

Treatment of Respiratory Viruses

What to know

Treatment is a core prevention strategy to lower risk from respiratory viruses. Core prevention strategies are important steps you can take to protect yourself and others from respiratory viruses.

Recommendation

Seek health care right away for [testing](#) and/or treatment if you believe you may have a respiratory virus (if you feel sick or tested positive for one) and you have [risk factors for severe illness](#). If you have flu or COVID-19, treatment may be an option to make your symptoms less severe and shorten the time you are sick. Treatment needs to be started within a few days of when your symptoms begin.

How it works

Treatments for COVID-19 and for flu can lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick. They also may reduce the risk of complications, including those that can result in hospitalization. For people with [risk factors for severe illness](#) early treatment can mean having milder illness.

Steps you can take

Individuals can

- Know the treatment options for [flu](#) and [COVID-19](#) before you get sick.
- Talk with a healthcare provider about planning to access treatment in advance of when you might need it.
- Talk with friends and family about how antiviral treatment could help reduce their chances of being hospitalized or dying from respiratory viruses like COVID-19 and flu.
- Take all treatments as prescribed.
- Talk to a healthcare provider about any questions you have about treatments.

Organizations can

- Share educational materials about respiratory virus treatment options:
 - [Flu](#)
 - [COVID-19](#)
- Provide employees with paid time off to seek treatment for a respiratory virus, as needed.

Key times for prevention

All of the prevention strategies described in this guidance can be helpful to reduce risk. They are especially helpful when:

- Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of [illness in your community](#).
- You or the people around you were recently exposed to a respiratory virus, are sick, or are recovering.
- You or the people around you have [risk factors for severe illness](#).