

## Covid, RSV, and Flu Update For February TC

We are experiencing a winter peak in Covid, RSV, and Flu. It's important that we have the most current information from reliable sources in order to protect ourselves. During the pandemic, we saw how effective precautions like social distancing and masking reduced the spread of these three. If you would like information about Covid, RSV, and Flu, go to [www. leisuretowne.org](http://www.leisuretowne.org), under "**Health and Wellness.**"

### COVID, RSV, and FLU UPDATE FOR 2024

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?:

Currently, the dominant variant nationwide is [NJ.1](#), On Jan. 9, 2024, / Source: TODAY , Article by Sarah Jacoby, states that the new year is kicking off with a spike in respiratory illnesses across the U.S., including COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus. Considering all the circulating illnesses right now, it might be time for masking to make a comeback, the experts say.

"We're certainly in the winter peak of respiratory viruses," Dr. Albert Ko, professor of epidemiology and medicine at the Yale School of Public Health, tells TODAY.com. A post-holiday COVID spike alongside the usual winter illnesses, like flu and RSV, make this surge "very much expected." Amid this rise in the spread of illnesses, **mask mandates** are already back in hospital systems in Los Angeles County and New York City. and many of us should probably follow suit, Ko says.

We are currently experiencing a major COVID-19 surge in the U.S. But experts stressed that it's more important to focus on how widespread COVID-19 has been over the course of months, rather than just looking at the height of a particular peak in the surge. Another factor in the current surge is that newly emerged coronavirus strains are even more infectious. The most recent CDC data suggest that the highly contagious **NJ.1** coronavirus variant is responsible for most cases right now. "The current strain right now seems to be packing a meaner punch than the prior strains."

**SHOULD YOU WEAR A MASK:** During the early years of the pandemic, we saw how effective precautions like social distancing and widespread masking were at reducing the spread of not just COVID-19, and other illnesses as well. **Wearing a mask** amid a spike in respiratory viruses is "kind of a common sense thing," Dr. Joseph Khabbaza, a pulmonary and critical care specialist at the Cleveland Clinic, tells TODAY.com, like using a parachute when jumping out of a plane. While masking isn't 100% effective at preventing transmission of COVID-19, it can reduce the amount of virus you're exposed to, That's important because even the immunity we have from vaccines can be "overwhelmed if you encounter large doses of a virus," he explains. So, wearing a mask can be beneficial — even if you're up-to-date on vaccines.

If you're not sick, the decision to wear a mask or not should depend on your individual risk factors, level of risk tolerance and the other protections you're taking, such as staying up-to-date on vaccinations, Khabbaza says. People who are at a higher risk for severe complications of respiratory illnesses like flu and COVID, including transplant patients and other immunocompromised people, should be taking extra precautions like masking, Khabbaza explains. "These are people that have never really been out of the woods these last three years in terms of risk," he says, "and those are the ones I always worry about and think about the most.

### **HOW LONG ARE YOU CONTAGIOUS AFTER YOU TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-**

**19:**The CDC states that you may remain contagious after 5 days of isolation. Continue to wear a well-fitting and high quality mask or respirator around others at home and in public for 5 additional days (day 6 through day 10) after the end of your 5-day isolation period.

### **MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS OF LONG TERM COVID:**

The most common symptoms of long COVID are:

- **extreme tiredness (fatigue)**
- **feeling short of breath.**
- **loss of smell.**
- **muscle aches.**
- **bain fog**

**RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV):**RSV is a highly contagious respiratory virus that can make you sick and possibly send you to the hospital, especially if you are 60 years and older. RSV can be spread by touching an infected surface or if an infected person coughs or sneezes and their droplets contact another person's eyes, nose, or mouth.

Initial signs of RSV are similar to mild cold symptoms, including **congestion, runny nose, fever, cough, and sore throat.** Everyday Preventive Measures to Limit the Spread of RSV:-

- **Stay home when sick.**
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your shirt sleeve, not your hands.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.**
- **Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.**

**INFLUENZA (FLU):** Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Individuals with suspected or confirmed flu, who do not have a fever, should stay home or from

work at least 4-5 days after the onset of symptoms. Persons with the flu are most **contagious during the first 3 days of their illness.**

People 65 years and older are at higher risk of developing serious complications from Flu compared with young, healthy adults. Also, you are at higher risk if Flu signs and symptoms come on suddenly. People who are sick with flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- **Fever\*/feeling feverish or chills**
- **Cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny or stuffy nose**
- **Muscle or body aches**
- **Headaches**
- **Fatigue (tiredness)**
- **Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea**

\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

### **TRAVELING GUIDELINES:**

Before you travel, take steps to prepare so you can stay safe and healthy during your trip. Check CDC's destination pages for travel health information. Check CDC's webpage for your destination to see what vaccines or medicines you may need and what diseases or health risks are a concern at your destination. The CDC monitors respiratory illness around the world. Contact CDC at **[wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/faq](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/faq)**