



Vaccination information
for Natives by Natives

Staying Safe from Respiratory Illnesses



Our ancestors faced many serious respiratory illnesses. Some even died from them. Respiratory illnesses - like flu, RSV, and COVID - are still very serious today. However, nowadays we are fortunate to have vaccines that can help us protect ourselves and our communities.

This handout is designed to help you and your family stay healthy and avoid respiratory illnesses.



“ Get vaccinated as early as possible. Often the most up-to-date vaccines for flu, RS , and COVID are available in early Fall, because peak illness season runs from then through Spring. But getting your shots later is better than not getting them at all. Talk with your provider. ”

– Tam Lutz, MPH, MHA, Lummi Nation Tribal Elder

Common Symptoms

Respiratory illnesses attack your whole body and cause some or all of these:



Fever & Chills



Sore throat



Headaches



Tiredness



Cough



Runny nose



Muscle aches



Trouble breathing

They can also result in hospitalization or even death, especially for those most vulnerable, like Elders, infants, and people with certain medical conditions.

Respiratory Illnesses are Sneaky

About once a year, flu, RS , and COVID-19 all change how they look to try to trick your body. That's why we need to get flu, RS , and COVID-19 shots each year – so our bodies can stay up to date on how to recognize and fight t ese serious respiratory illnesses.

Respiratory illnesses are common infections that affect our nose, throat, lungs, and breathing passages.



“ Sometimes people think the COVID-19 shot makes you sick with COVID, which is not true. When you feel side effects, like a fever, after you get a shot, what you are feeling is your body gearing up to fight COVID-19. Getting COVID can be 100 times worse than the vaccine’s side effects. ”

- Mary Scott, RN, Navajo Nation Elder

How Sickness Spreads



Someone who is sick coughs or sneezes, and you breathe in the droplets.



You touch a surface with droplets on it, then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.



You have close contact, like kissing, with someone who is sick.

Prevent Spreading Sickness By



Washing your hands regularly.



Not touching your face without washing your hands.



Using hand sanitizer.



Wearing a mask.



Hugging instead of kissing.



Getting vaccinated.



Elbow tapping instead of shaking hands.

How Shots Works

Within our bodies, each of us has warrior cells that stand guard and attack diseases. When we get an RSV shot, for example, the ingredients in the shot tell our warrior cells how to recognize and fight RSV. That is why if you get an RSV shot, you are less likely to get sick with RSV. It can also reduce the seriousness of illness if you happen to get sick.

Shot Side Effects

People who get vaccinated may have mild side effects, like fever or soreness, that go away in a few days. Mild side effects are a good sign that your warrior cells are preparing to be able to recognize and fight disease.

Talk to your doctor about getting multiple vaccines at once. It's safe and can cut down on clinic visits! Also, if you are pregnant, don't worry. Flu, RSV, and COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and beneficial for you and baby. Just check in with your health provider around the best time in your pregnancy to schedule your shots.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

Additional Information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative.

For questions, contact us at VacciNative@npaihb.org.

