November 10, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Respiratory virus season has started, and **we are requesting your partnership in promoting, encouraging, and facilitating vaccination of your communities, patient populations, and staff. Vaccination reduces your individual chances of developing severe infection and improves the health of our communities.** Achieving high vaccination rates in the population is critical to minimize the impact of respiratory viruses on the healthcare system.

There are three vaccines to protect against respiratory viruses:

1. Influenza (flu) – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older. For adults 65 years of age and older, a high-dose, adjuvanted, or recombinant flu vaccine is recommended.
2. COVID-19 –DPH recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older receive a 2026-2027 COVID-19 vaccine and emphasizes the importance of vaccination for those at highest risk, including those 65 years and older, children 6 months - 2 years of age, and people of any age with underlying medical conditions that make them higher risk for severe COVID.
3. RSV – DPH recommends a one-time RSV vaccination for adults aged 75 and older and recommends that healthcare providers discuss RSV vaccination with patients who are 50-74 years. Additionally, DPH recommends that infants, young children and certain pregnant people be immunized for RSV.

Many patients treated in hospitals and licensed healthcare facilities are generally at increased risk for severe disease, hospitalization and death due to respiratory viruses. This includes those who are 65 years and older and those who are immunocompromised or have multiple underlying medical conditions. Keeping healthcare staff and patients up-to-date with all recommended vaccinations improves patient and staff safety.

DPH facility licensure regulations require hospitals and licensed healthcare facilities to ensure all healthcare personnel receive their annual flu vaccine and the 2026-2027 COVID-19 vaccine. More information about facility vaccination rates and requirements can be found on DPH's website.

Consistent with prior respiratory virus seasons, DPH continues to expect that hospitals will provide vaccinations to any admitted patient who has not already received a seasonal flu vaccine or 2026-2027 COVID-19 vaccine. To increase vaccination rates and ensure that Massachusetts receives the benefits we expect from a well-vaccinated population, we ask that your hospitals and licensed health care facilities take steps to promote vaccine uptake within your systems, including:

1. offering on-site vaccination for staff and patients for flu *and* COVID-19;
2. providing RSV immunization with RSV monoclonal antibodies to newborns prior to discharge alongside hepatitis B vaccine;
3. incorporating RSV vaccination for pregnant people and in patients who are 50 years and older, as clinically appropriate, into standard workflows; and
4. promoting the importance of vaccination via signage, newsletters and/or your patient portal.

If on-site vaccination is not offered, hospitals and licensed healthcare facilities should provide information and resources to connect patients and staff to vaccination sites. Vaccines are readily available for healthcare facilities to order through their usual processes. Local pharmacy availability can be found on Vaccinefinder.org and healthcare facilities may check with local boards of health about the location and timing of any community-based clinics being offered.

For more information about getting vaccinated and staying up –to date, please refer to DPH's guidance on vaccination for COVID-19, flu, and RSV. For the most recent Massachusetts respiratory illness surveillance data, visit the Viral Respiratory Illness Dashboard.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the health and well-being of your patients, staff, and our communities.

Sincerely,

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