

# Stay Safe this Winter – Here's How



As temperatures cool down and we move inside, you are more likely to be exposed to viruses than you were during the summer months. In the fall, it is important that you receive the vaccines you need to protect yourself from illnesses like the flu or COVID-19. Either of these illnesses can lead to long-term, serious issues, like pneumonia, that could eventually result in being admitted to a hospital. There are three vaccines that you should be sure to be up-to-date with now: influenza, COVID and pneumonia vaccines. Below are some of the more frequently asked questions about these vaccines to help you decide what to do.

## **Why do I need a influenza (flu) vaccine every year?**

The influenza virus changes every year. So to best protect yourself against flu, you need to have a vaccine for the strain of virus that is expected to be the worst that year.

## **Why do I need to consider taking the pneumonia vaccine?**

The pneumonia vaccine protects you against other viruses that cause you to develop an infection in your lungs. Individuals with kidney disease should seriously consider getting a pneumonia vaccine. Most vaccines are effective for five years, and two-three doses can protect you for a lifetime. Check with your doctor about when you should get your next vaccine and what strength dose you need to stay protected.

## **When should I get my influenza and pneumonia vaccines?**

These are both recommended in early fall to be prepared for the winter season. If you have had the pneumonia vaccine in the last five years you need to check with your physician about when your next vaccine is due. Keep track of that date, and be sure to take your influenza vaccine every year.

## **Why do I need to get a COVID 19 additional dose?**

The COVID-19 virus changes frequently. In the beginning of the pandemic, we had a type of COVID known as the Delta strain. Most of us were vaccinated against that strain, but now we are dealing with the COVID e Omicron strain (Ba4/Ba5). The vaccines offered for the Delta strain do not work against the current Omicron strain, so you'll need to take an additional dose of the new bivalent vaccine to prevent this new strain from making you sick.

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## When should I get my additional COVID-19 dose?

You can take the new bivalent vaccine if it has been at least two months since you completed your primary vaccination series or received the most recent booster dose. All the new bivalent vaccines are approved for use in those 18 or older. Only the Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent brand is approved for children 12 and older.

## If I already had COVID 19, will I be protected against COVID now?

Unfortunately, if you had COVID at the start of the pandemic, you are not protected against the new type of virus people are getting now, and you will need an additional COVID-19 bivalent vaccine for protection. Even if you have had COVID recently your protection will wear off, so you should consider getting an additional dose of the bivalent vaccine three months after your infection.

## I have never taken a COVID vaccine. Why should I now?

There is a new vaccine available for COVID-19. The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is a 2-dose primary series only. If you had concerns about both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, you may want to consider this new vaccine. It was made using a different scientific process that has been safe and effective in making vaccines like the flu vaccine in the past.

## How can I get all these shots done during the fall?

It is safe to get both the Influenza vaccine and COVID additional doses administered at the same time! So you can schedule these together, and if you need the pneumonia vaccination this year, do that during your next visit!



End-Stage Renal Disease  
Network Program

**For more information or to file a grievance, please contact us:**

**IPRO End-Stage Renal Disease Network Program**

**Corporate Office:** 1979 Marcus Avenue, Lake Success, NY 11042-1072

Patient Services: (516) 231-9767 • Toll-Free: (800) 238-3773

Email: [esrdnetworkprogram@ipro.org](mailto:esrdnetworkprogram@ipro.org) • Web: [esrd.ipro.org](http://esrd.ipro.org)

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