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November 10, 2022

Dear Los Angeles Parents and Families,

There is currently a high level of respiratory viruses circulating nationally and in LA County. CDC is reporting high levels of influenza (or flu) and respiratory syncytial virus (or RSV) as well rhinovirus (a virus that causes the common cold) across the entire country. COVID-19 continues to spread as well. The purpose of this letter is to outline steps families can take to help lower the spread of respiratory illness in schools.

Get vaccinated for flu and boosted for COVID-19. Both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines protect people from getting very sick. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get their seasonal flu shot. The fall updated (bivalent) COVID-19 booster is recommended for everyone ages 5 years and older if it has been at least 2 months since their last COVID-19 dose (either final primary series dose or last booster dose). For people who haven't yet gotten any COVID-19 vaccines yet, now is an important time to start. Everyone ages 6 months and older should get vaccinated against COVID-19. The flu and COVID-19 vaccine doses can be given at the same time.

Wear a mask that fits and filters well indoors in public spaces, including at schools and worksites. This is a great way to help slow the spread of all respiratory viruses, not just COVID-19. Infants and children under 2 years of age should not wear a mask. See ph.lacounty.gov/masks to learn more.

Cover coughs and sneezes. Children should learn to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze (and then put the tissue in the trash right away).

Wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer often – especially after coughing or sneezing, using the bathroom, or before preparing food. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands.

Improve airflow in your home and other indoor places. You may or may not know if someone in your home or if a visitor to your home has COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses. Open windows and doors, use fans and portable air cleaners, run heating and air, and upgrade filters. (See CDC [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#) and the California Department of Public Health flyer [Tips for Reducing Risk Indoors](#)). Avoid crowded indoor places.

Get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms and/or if are a close contact to someone with COVID-19, even if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. It is also a good idea to test before attending an indoor gathering or event, especially if you will be with people who are at high risk for severe illness. Consider getting tested before and after travel. If you test positive, cancel your plans, and isolate at home away from others even if you feel well. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests to learn more about when to get a test, self-tests, and understanding your test results. Many schools are distributing test kits that students should use before returning to school after the Thanksgiving break.

Stay home if sick. Respiratory viruses are easily spread to others. Parents should contact their child's doctor if the child has symptoms that are more severe or unusual including difficulty breathing, severe muscle pain making it hard to walk, inability to drink liquids, lethargy or if they have fever for more than 5 days. See [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) to learn more about common respiratory illnesses in kids and when to contact a doctor. If you need help finding a doctor, call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1, which is available 24/7.

Regards,



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