

2026-27 Flu and Respiratory Season

Respiratory season starts in October, peaks from December to February, and lasts until May in the United States. It brings with it many viruses that may result in serious illness, including influenza, pneumonia, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and covid. Fortunately, vaccines are in place to help prevent severe disease and complications, which most commonly occur in those aged 65 and over, those with certain chronic health conditions (such as asthma, heart disease and stroke, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease), pregnant women, children under age five and people with certain disabilities.

The Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) will kick off its annual flu shot administration on Saturday, October 3rd from 9 AM till 12 PM at the Meigs County Health Department located at 112 E. Memorial Drive in Pomeroy. The event is planned as a drive-thru, weather permitting. Flu shots will then be offered at the Health Department starting Monday October 5th on a walk-in basis during business hours 8 AM – 12 PM and 1 PM – 4 PM Monday through Thursday. Friday shots are **by appointment only**. The MCHD is also trying something new this year to allow individuals additional opportunities to receive their flu shots as we are hosting two evening clinics till 5:30 PM, the first on Wednesday, October 7th, and the second on Tuesday October 13th.

As of September 2nd, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) have published their 2026–2027 influenza vaccination recommendations. The recommendations are aligned: ***All people ≥6 months and without medical contraindications should receive an annual influenza vaccine ahead of the 2026-2027 season.*** As with previous seasons, individuals with egg allergies may safely receive the flu vaccine. The CDC recommends a person be vaccinated against the flu by the end of October as it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to become effective and state that “most people who become ill after influenza virus infection recover without serious complications or sequelae. However, influenza can be associated with serious illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths, particularly among older adults, very young children, pregnant persons, and persons of all ages with certain chronic medical conditions. Influenza also is an important cause of missed work and school.” Having said that, the flu shot is the single best way to reduce the risk of seasonal flu and its potentially serious complications.

The same as during the 2025-26 respiratory illness season, RSV vaccination is recommended for three groups. First, CDC recommends infants aged < 8 months born during or entering their first RSV season who are not protected by maternal vaccination receive one dose of RSV vaccine between October 1st and March 31st. Second, adults 50 years and older are recommended to receive one dose of RSV vaccine. Finally, pregnant women between 32-36 weeks gestation are recommended to receive one dose of RSV vaccine between September 1st and January 31st.

Also the same as during the 2025-26 respiratory illness season, adult pneumonia (PCV) vaccination is recommended by the CDC for individuals 50 years and older. The recommendations for pneumonia vaccination vary depending upon which vaccine(s) the person has already received. To determine whether or not an individual needs the pneumonia vaccine, you can call your provider or the MCHD nurses, and we will be happy to look up your vaccination record and make recommendations.

The FDA approved the 2026-2027 COVID vaccine on August 27, 2026. This year's vaccine will target the JN.1-lineage XFG variant. As with the past couple years, recommendations vary based upon the organization. At this time, the MCHD is awaiting further guidance from the Ohio Department of Health regarding COVID-19 vaccine administration orders.

Side effects of these vaccines include, but are not limited to: soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given, fatigue, headache, muscle or joint pain, and sometimes nausea or diarrhea. A person may also experience low-grade fever, which usually begins soon after vaccination and last 1-2 days. Serious allergic reactions to flu vaccines are very rare. However, as with any medication/vaccine, serious side effects may occur; thus, a person should weigh the benefit versus the risk before receiving any vaccine.

It is important to remember that good health habits, such as staying home when you are sick, avoiding people who are sick, covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like flu and other illnesses discussed above. Proper handwashing steps include: wetting hands with clean, running water, applying soap, lathering for at least 20

seconds, rinsing thoroughly, and drying with a clean towel or air drying. A good technique to estimate 20 seconds is to sing the “Happy Birthday” song through twice.

The MCHD has adult RSV and pneumonia vaccines available year-round. Seasonal flu vaccines are stocked only during respiratory season. We will have a limited amount of flu and pneumonia vaccines provided by the Federal 317 program for adults aged 19 and over who are uninsured or underinsured, as well as VFC flu vaccine for those aged 6 months through 18 years who are uninsured or underinsured. We also stock these vaccines for those who are privately insured and accept self-pay upon request. The self-pay charge for the flu shot is \$24.00. Photo ID and Medicare/Medicaid/commercial insurance card(s), if applicable, are required when you come to get your shot(s). If you have any questions, please call 740-992-6626.

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