

LONG TERM CARE INFECTIOUS DISEASE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Georgia Long Term Care Infectious Disease Educational Program Biannual e-Newsletter:

Winter 2023

Welcome, we're glad you're here.

Another perk of attending a Georgia Long Term Care Infectious Disease Educational Program - Foundations/Principles Course is gaining access to this bi-annual newsletter curated for nursing home staff members like you.

Be sure to check out our webpage for other helpful resources.

[GA LTCIDEP Webpage](#)



Focus Area: The Tripledemic - RSV, Flu, and COVID-19

When Three Diseases Collide

What is a tripledemic? There's no scientific definition for this term, as it has recently been coined to describe the collision of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza, and COVID-19 and their impacts on the U.S. healthcare system. While none of these are peaking at the same time, the combined number of severe cases are pushing hospitals nationwide past their current ICU bed capacity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, influenza and RSV cases were low due to social distancing and mask wearing precautions. As normal social routines return, respiratory illness are making a major comeback. According to the CDC, this flu season has already seen the highest number of hospitalizations in more than a decade.

Tulsa ER & Hospital published a chart differentiating the symptoms of each versus cold and allergy symptoms. You can view the chart below or click [here](#) to view the article with more details.

Comparing Symptoms					
Symptoms	COVID-19	Flu	Cold	Allergies	RSV
Body aches	Sometimes	✓	✓	✗	✗
Chills	Sometimes	✓	Rarely	✗	Sometimes
Cough	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fatigue	✓	✓	✓	Sometimes	✗
Fever	✓	✓	Rarely	✗	Sometimes
Headache	Sometimes	✓	Rarely	✗	✗
Itchy eyes	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Loss of taste/smell	✓	Sometimes	Rarely	Sometimes	✗
Nasal congestion	Rarely	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-productive cough	Sometimes	Sometimes	✗	✗	✗
Runny nose	Rarely	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sneezing	Sometimes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shortness of breath	Sometimes	✓	✓	Sometimes	✓

TULSA ER & HOSPITAL



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

According to the CDC, RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms for a week or two. Symptoms include runny nose, decrease in appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, and wheezing. However, for infants and older adults, RSV can be severe and require hospitalization. Some may require additional oxygen, IV fluids, or intubation with mechanical ventilation.

In older adults, including LTC residents, RSV can also cause serious health problems such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia. RSV can also lead to worsening of serious conditions such as asthma, COPD, and congestive heart failure. There is currently no vaccine available for RSV. The CDC produced this [flyer](#) on RSV impacts on older adults.

Older Adults are at High Risk for Severe RSV Infection
Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common virus that affects the lungs and breathing passages

RSV infections can be dangerous for certain adults. Adults at high risk for severe RSV infection include:

- Older adults, especially those 65 years and older
- Adults with chronic heart or lung disease
- Adults with weakened immune systems

Each year, it is estimated that between 60,000–120,000 older adults in the United States are hospitalized and 6,000–10,000 of them die due to RSV infection.

Severe RSV infection

When an older adult gets RSV infection, they typically have mild cold-like symptoms including runny nose, sore throat, cough, and headache. But RSV can sometimes lead to serious conditions such as:

- Pneumonia (infection of the lungs)
- More severe symptoms for people with asthma
- More severe symptoms for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (a chronic disease of the lungs that makes it hard to breathe)
- Congestive heart failure (when the heart can't pump blood and oxygen to the body's tissues)

Older adults who get very sick from RSV may need to be hospitalized. Some may even die. Older adults are at greater risk than young adults for serious complications from RSV because our immune systems weaken as we age older.

How to protect yourself and loved ones

RSV circulation starts in the fall and peaks in the winter. If you are at high risk for severe RSV infection, or if you interact with an older adult, you should take extra care to stay healthy:

- Wash your hands often**
Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Washing your hands will help protect you from germs.
- Keep your hands off your face**
Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people**
Avoid close contact, such as kissing and sharing cups or eating utensils, with people who have cold like symptoms.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes**
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash afterward.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces**
Clean and disinfect surfaces that people frequently touch, such as doorknobs. When people infected with RSV touch surfaces and objects, they can leave behind germs. Also, when they cough or sneeze, droplets containing germs can land on surfaces and objects.
- Stay home when you are sick**
If possible, stay home from work, school, and public areas when you are sick. This will help protect others from catching your illness.

Scientists are working to develop vaccines

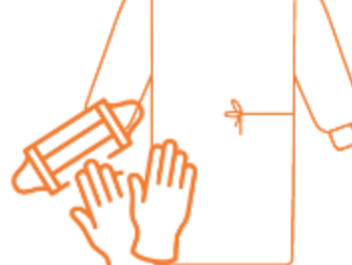
There is no vaccine to prevent RSV infection yet, but scientists are working hard to develop one. If you are concerned about your risk for RSV, talk to your doctor.

www.cdc.gov/rsv

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

October 2022

Influenza (Flu)



Influenza, or flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. This seasonal illness varies in severity and can range from mild to severe. The best way to prevent or lessen the severity of the flu is to get the flu vaccine each year.

Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions, like many long term care residents, are at a higher risk of developing flu-related complications. Emergency warning signs of flu complications are listed below, people experiencing these warning signs should obtain medical care right away.

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Persistent dizziness, confusion, inability to arouse
- Seizures
- Not urinating
- Severe muscle pain
- Severe weakness or unsteadiness
- Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions



COVID-19

COVID-19 is an illness we are all too familiar with these days, but one that has recently seen an increase in the number of cases. Subvariants of Omicron, specifically BQ.1, BQ1.1, and BA.5, are making up most reported cases of COVID-19. Each variant has different levels of immunity provided by COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. However, for LTC residents who may be older adults and/or immunocompromised, the bivalent COVID-19 booster is highly recommended to prevent serious illness.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, remember to cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and to take a test and isolate when experiencing symptoms.

Upcoming LTCID - Principles Courses:

Click [here](#) to download a full schedule with links to register.

Like our Facebook page to stay up to date on course offerings as they are scheduled.

[Facebook Page](#)

References

- <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/high-risk/older-adults.html>
- <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/tripledemic-flu-rsv-and-covid-19#:~:text=There's%20no%20scientific%20definition%20for,peak%20at%20the%20same%20time.>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/22/podcasts/the-daily/flu-season-rsv-covid-tripledemic.html?showTrailer=1>
- <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/11/1142099805/indoor-masking-advised-washington-california-new-york>
- https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Georgia&data_type=Risk&null=Risk&list_select_county=13219
- [RSV Older Adults Flyer](#)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/keyfacts.htm>
- <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/11/04/us-faces-highest-flu-hospitalization-rate-in-a-decade.html>
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant-classifications.html#anchor_1632154493691
- <https://www.nebraskamed.com/COVID/what-covid-19-variants-are-going-around>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/covid19-guidance.html>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/health/covid-vaccination-elderly.html>

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