To: CAHAN San Diego Participants
Date: October 26, 2026
From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: 2026-2027 Respiratory Virus Season Immunization Recommendations and Early Increased Influenza Activity.

Key Messages

- Surveillance for respiratory viruses in San Diego County shows an early increase in influenza activity particularly among children 5 to 17 years of age because this group has an influenza test positivity at 27% as of October 17.
- The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the West Coast Health Alliance issued immunization recommendations for influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) disease, and COVID-19 (PDF) for the 2026–27 respiratory virus season: All Californians 6 months and older who choose protection are recommended to receive updated COVID-19 and influenza vaccines.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics clarified for RSV vaccines: Otherwise, healthy infants (low risk) who received RSV vaccine in April of 2026 because of ongoing RSV transmission who are now 8 months of age or older are not eligible for a second dose 2026–27 season.
- CDPH confirmed respiratory virus vaccines will continue to be covered by health plans and insurance companies regulated in California.
- Given the increased activity, immunization against respiratory viruses should be encouraged particularly for children and those at risk for more severe infections.

Situation

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that influenza surveillance indicators have been increasing since late August 2026. Although influenza activity is low nationally, Pacific Coast states currently have the highest influenza activity. In San Diego County, respiratory virus surveillance confirms an early increase in influenza activity, hospitalizations, and deaths, overlapping with the elevated but declining COVID indicators, following a late summer peak. As of October 17th, the weekly overall influenza test positivity is 10.5% (compared to only 1.0% this time last year), but test positivity for 5 to 17 years old is 27%, up from 20% last week. There have already been 9 deaths this season, all adults age 65 years and older. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) has a current weekly test positivity of 0.9%. There has been one RSV death in an adult over the age of 64 years of age this season to date.

Background

Immunization remains the best method of preventing severe respiratory virus infections. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) issued immunization recommendations for the 2026-2027 respiratory virus season. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, infants at standard risk for severe RSV infection born in March or April 2026 (during an unusually long RSV season extending into April) who received one dose of RSV immunization shortly after birth are not eligible for a second dose of RSV immunization even though they are younger than 8 months of age entering their second RSV season.

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Actions Requested

1. ***Stay aware*** of local respiratory virus activity by viewing the County of San Diego Respiratory Virus Surveillance Report, which now includes hospitalization forecasting.
2. ***Educate*** patients on vaccine safety, hand and respiratory hygiene, well-fitted masks, and staying home when sick.
3. ***Encourage*** COVID and influenza vaccination of all persons 6 months and older following CDPH guidance (attached).
4. ***Administer RSV immunizations*** to eligible patients including:
    a. All adults aged 75 years and older who have not previously received an RSV vaccine dose (Abrysvo, Arexvy, mResvia)
    b. Adults aged 50-74 years with certain underlying medical conditions that increase their risk for severe RSV who have not previously received an RSV vaccine (Abrysvo, Arexvy, mResvia)
    c. Pregnant persons 32-36 weeks pregnant during September through March (Abrysvo)
    d. Infants younger than 8 months of age who are born during or are entering **their first RSV season** (October through March) if:
        i. the mother did not receive RSV vaccine (Abrysvo) during pregnancy, or
        ii. the mother's RSV vaccination status is unknown, or
        iii. the infant was born within 14 days of maternal RSV vaccination
    e. Children 8-19 months at high risk for severe RSV disease and entering their second RSV season (October through March) (nirsevimab/Beyfortus). The AAP expanded the list of high-risk conditions to include:
        i. Children born preterm, at <32 weeks, 0 days' gestation, regardless of the need for medication or other support.
        ii. Children with hemodynamically significant congenital heart disease (ie, a defect that can result in symptoms and/or cardiac chamber dilation).
        iii. Children with anatomic pulmonary abnormalities or neuromuscular disorders that put them at risk for severe RSV disease.
        iv. Children with Down syndrome or other chromosomal differences placing them at higher risk of severe RSV disease.
    f. Infants < 8 months of age who are not at increased risk for severe RSV and have previously received RSV immunization in 2026 are not eligible for a second dose.
5. ***Identify and treat*** patients who would benefit from antivirals as soon as possible

Resources

- Respiratory Vaccine Recommendations | CDPH
- Respiratory Virus Testing and Treatment | CDPH
- Recommendations for the Prevention of RSV in Infants and Children | AAP
- RSV Immunization Administration Frequently Asked Questions | AAP
- Respiratory Virus Surveillance Report | COSD
- Respiratory Viruses | COSD

Thank you for your participation.

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Consensus WCHA 2026-2027 Respiratory Virus Season Immunization Recommendations

The West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) is issuing immunization recommendations for the 2026-2027 respiratory virus season. These recommendations are informed by trusted national medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) (PDF), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).

Immunization is the best protection available against respiratory viruses such as COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. Seasonal immunization is also a critical public health tool to reduce serious illness, community transmission, and health care systems strain.

The WCHA believes that all recommended immunizations should be accessible to the people of our states. WCHA emphasizes the importance of protecting people most impacted by these respiratory viruses, especially our most vulnerable. This includes the youngest and oldest individuals in our states; other individuals at higher risk for complications, including people who are pregnant; individuals living in congregate settings; and those who live or work with people at higher risk. The WCHA will continue to evaluate new evidence and recommendations as they become available and is committed to sharing any updated assessments with our communities.

Age/Condition	COVID-19	Influenza	RSV
Children	• All 6–23 months • All 2–18 years with risk factors or never vaccinated against COVID-19 • All who are in close contact with others with risk factors[1] • All who choose to reduce risk of severe illness	• All 6 months and older[2]	• All younger than 8 months[3] • All 8-19 months with risk factors
Pregnancy	• All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant or postpartum	• All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant or postpartum	• All who are 32-36 weeks gestational age[3, 4]
Adults	• All 65 years and older • All 19–64 years with risk factors • All who are in close contact with others with risk factors[1] • All who choose to reduce risk of severe illness	• All	• All 75 years and older[4] • All 50–74 years with risk factors[4]
Healthcare Workers	• All	• All	• All who meet criteria above

1. COVID-19 vaccine is available for persons 6 months and older.
2. Two doses given at least 4 weeks apart are recommended for ages 6 months–8 years who are getting flu vaccine for the first time.
3. Protect infants with either prenatal RSV vaccine or infant dose of nirsevimab or clesrovimab.
4. RSV vaccination during pregnancy or for adults is currently recommended once rather than annually.

About West Coast Health Alliance

- The West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) is a partnership between California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington to ensure that public health recommendations are guided by safety, efficacy, transparency, access and trust.