



MARTHA'S VINEYARD BOARDS OF HEALTH

CURRENT INFORMATION ON RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

COVID-19, FLU & RSV

All around the country, we are seeing unusually high frequency and severity of multiple respiratory illnesses. The island is no exception. Longstanding seasonal respiratory viruses Flu and RSV, which had given us a "pass" in the past few pandemic seasons, are now back in full force, with COVID once again increasing rapidly. Hospitals are filling up, and the situation in pediatric ICUs is especially dire.

Protect! Don't Infect!

Holiday gatherings are a major driver of transmission of these and other respiratory illnesses. Please take these steps to keep family, friends and our community safe:

- **First, last, and Foremost:** ***Stay home if you feel sick!*** What feels like a minor head cold to you could be lethal to someone else. It's not worth the risk. If you cannot stay home, please take every precaution to avoid infecting people.



- **Stay up-to-date with your vaccines for COVID-19 and flu.** Vaccines do not guarantee that you won't get sick. But they are effective at making the infection less severe. They are an important measure *in addition to* other precautions. Vaccination is not a cure-all!

- **Wear an N95 mask in crowded public indoor spaces**. This will protect you from all viruses and prevent you from infecting others if you are asymptomatically infected.

- **Ventilate**  **indoor spaces**. It dilutes the airborne virus load.

- **Test before you "Guest!"** Free rapid Antigen tests for COVID are available at all Town Halls and Libraries. Please test before attending gatherings.

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Hands carry virus to your mouth/nose/eyes where the virus can find entry.

- **Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing**. And then Wash your Hands! Do not "reach out and touch someone" with virus on your hands!

- **Clean and disinfect surfaces.** especially those that are touched often, like doorknobs.

About Masks

We strongly advise people to wear a mask when you are in indoor public spaces, regardless of your vaccination status. **Businesses** are urged to provide the best ventilation possible in their space. They also have the right to require mask wearing by their staff and customers.

Masks vary greatly in effectiveness. If you are not breathing *through* the mask, you breath in viruses hanging in the air. Therefore, wear a snug N95 or KN95 mask! **High quality N-95 masks are available free of cost while supplies last at all Island Board of Health offices.**

Flu and COVID Vaccination

There is no vaccine for RSV, but please get your annual flu shot as soon as you can. **COVID and Flu Vaccines are available from your Doctor. Health Imperatives (Family Planning) also offers COVID vaccination with a $75 gift card incentive. Call 508-693-1208 to set up an appointment or walk in from noon to 4 on Wednesdays in December.**

About COVID Testing

If you know you were around someone who has COVID, test using an at-home OTC test starting 2 days after exposure. If you develop symptoms, please stay home! Remember that a negative antigen test does NOT mean you are not infected. It simply means that your viral load is low at the time you took the test. So be extra careful around others and test daily for at least a week. If you have symptoms and your home test is positive, you don't need to confirm the result with a lab-based test. Please take the time to report a positive result at https://rapidtestmv.org/, and call your Doctor to let them know, in case your doctor feels you should get treatment for your illness **Free COVID test kits are available at all Board of Health offices.**

Taking Care of Yourself at Home

Flu, COVID and RSV infection can vary in severity from asymptomatic to severe. It is always a good idea to let your Doctor's office know you are ill, but in most cases, you will not need to see your doctor or go to the emergency room.

Call your doctor about a fever if:

Age	Level of Fever
Under 3 months old	Fever of 100.4° F, (38 °C) or higher
3 months to 5 years old	Fever of 102 °F, (38.9 °C) or higher
Over 5 years old, including adults	Fever of 104 °F (40 °C) or higher that does not go down within 2 hours of treating

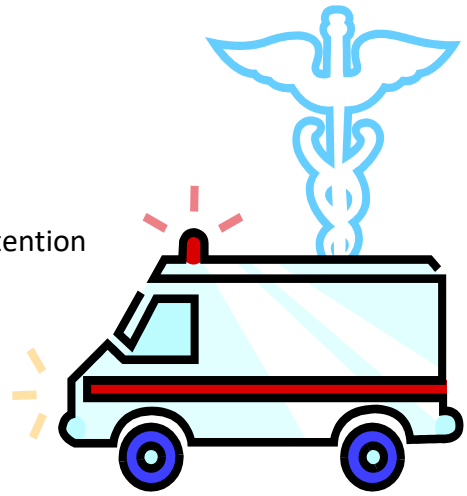


If the fever lasts more than 3 days, the person is not drinking fluids or is unable to hold them down, or you are concerned about how the child is acting, call your doctor for advice.

If you see the following warning signs, call 911

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Seizures



In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Seizures
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Have a wonderful and safe and happy Holiday Season!