



COVID-19 usually peaks in the late summer/early fall and in the winter, but people can get it at any time. To see how COVID-19 is moving through your community in real time, you can visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Respiratory Virus Dashboard.

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Congestion or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle or body aches

In Pennsylvania during the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season, more than 20,000 people were hospitalized and 1,200 people died because of COVID-19.

Most people have mild, cold-like symptoms and start to feel better after 1-2 weeks. However, infants, young children, older adults, and those with other health conditions, are more likely to get seriously sick, be hospitalized, or die from COVID-19. For people who already have other health conditions like heart or lung disease, a COVID-19 infection can make those conditions worse, even after they recover. Also, people that have no symptoms or mild symptoms can develop long COVID¹, which can cause lasting health issues.

COVID-19 vaccination offers protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death, especially for those at higher risk.



Pregnant mothers may be vaccinated at any time during their pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Infants less than 6 months old are too young to be vaccinated, so they can gain protection if their mother is vaccinated before they are born.



Infants and children 6-23 months old are at high risk for severe COVID-19, even if they are otherwise healthy. All children 6-23 months should be vaccinated.



Older adults are also at high risk of severe COVID-19. All adults 65 and older should be vaccinated.



Underlying conditions like asthma, cancer, heart, lung, liver, or kidney disease, immunocompromising conditions, and obesity are known to put people of any age at higher risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes. Anyone with these underlying conditions² should be vaccinated.

All adults 19-64 years old are recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, especially those who have never received one before.

For more information on COVID-19 vaccine recommendations, consult the American Academy of Family Physicians³, the American Academy of Pediatrics⁴, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)⁵, and the [PA DOH Respiratory Virus Vaccines page](#)⁶.

Serious vaccine side effects are rare

- Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis): 5 in 1 million shots
- Heart inflammation (myocarditis or pericarditis): 8 in 1 million shots, 27 in 1 million for young males
- A nerve problem (Guillain-Barré syndrome) was only seen with the J&J vaccine which is no longer used. This side effect does not occur when using an mRNA vaccine.
- Most side effects are mild, like sore arms, tiredness, or a low fever. They go away in a few days.
- The protection from vaccines greatly outweighs these rare risks for most people.
- Report unexpected side effects to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)⁷ to help keep vaccines safe.



COVID-19 is spread by close contact with sick people or contaminated surfaces or objects.

WAYS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19



Talk to your health care provider about getting the **COVID-19 vaccine**.



Avoid being around sick people, if possible.



Avoid touching your face if you have been around a sick person or are caring for someone who is sick.



Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Cover coughs and sneezes.



Clean and disinfect surfaces you touch a lot like cell phones and doorknobs.



Stay at home when you feel sick until you are without a fever for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.



If you have cold-like symptoms, you should not be around infants or older adults who may get seriously sick from COVID-19. If staying away until you feel better is not possible, you should follow the strategies above and avoid close contact until you feel better.

1. CDC.gov, Long COVID
2. CDC.gov, Underlying Conditions and the Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19
3. AAFP.org, COVID-19 Vaccine Fall 2025-26 Immunization Recommendations
4. HealthyChildren.org, AAP Releases Its Own Evidence-Based Immunization Schedule
5. ACOG.org, COVID-19 Vaccination Considerations for Obstetric-Gynecologic Care
6. PA.gov, Stay Up to Date on Respiratory Virus Vaccines
7. CDC.gov, Submitting a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) Report and Using VAERS Data