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NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ALERT

New Mexico Department of Health Announces Start of 2026-27 Respiratory Disease Season

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Background:

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) has announced the start of the 2026-2027 respiratory disease season. COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are circulating in the state and emergency department discharge diagnoses for COVID-19 and influenza have been rising for several consecutive weeks. NMDOH anticipates that health care visits for respiratory illness are expected to increase in the coming weeks and months. Vaccination against influenza, COVID-19 and RSV can help prevent infections and reduce disease severity and duration of illness.

NMDOH is using a new method to determine the start and end of the 2026-27 respiratory disease season. This method is based on an algorithm that accounts for both overall level and the rate of change of COVID-19, influenza, and RSV emergency department discharge diagnoses to determine when the season has started and ended.

Recommendations for Clinicians:

Testing for respiratory diseases

Clinicians should follow CDC's [Testing Guidance for Clinicians When SARS-CoV-2 and Influenza Viruses are Co-circulating](#). PCR or molecular multiplex assays that can test for influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and other respiratory pathogens are ideal for most patients. Singleplex assays and rapid antigen tests (low sensitivity) can be considered if multiplex assays are unavailable. In patients with unexplained clinically compatible syndromes but rapid antigen negative tests, nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) testing should be performed.

Testing for bacterial respiratory pathogens and RSV should be considered if singleplex assays or rapid antigen testing is negative for influenza and SARS-CoV-2

Vaccination:

With the start of respiratory season, providers should continue to encourage vaccination for eligible patients and themselves.

COVID-19 Vaccination:

In general, COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to all persons aged 6 months to 24 months and all persons aged 65 years and older. Additionally, individuals aged 2–64 years at [high risk of serious adverse outcomes](#) from COVID-19, pregnant people, those living in congregate settings, and healthcare personnel should be offered the vaccine. Healthy individuals aged 2–64 years may also be offered COVID-19 vaccine. There is no preference for one vaccine manufacturer over the other. NMDOH updated [COVID-19 vaccine guidance for the 2026-27 respiratory disease season](#) (PDF) in September 2026 .

Influenza Vaccination:

NMDOH recommends that everyone six months of age and older get influenza vaccine each influenza season. Individuals aged 65 years and older should preferentially receive high-dose or adjuvanted influenza vaccines but can receive standard-dose vaccine if high dose is not available at the time of vaccination. COVID-19 and influenza vaccine can be administered at the same clinic visit.

Certain groups of people are strongly recommended to be vaccinated because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications, or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications. These include but are not limited to very young children (6 months – 5 years old), pregnant women, older adults (aged 65 years and older), anyone living or working in a congregate care facility, certain race and ethnic minority groups, and individuals with underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, kidney, liver, lung or heart disease, neurological disease, severe obesity (40 kg/m² or greater) and immunocompromise.

RSV Vaccination:

For prevention of severe RSV disease in infants and young children, NMDOH recommends either maternal vaccination (Abrysvo) administered during 32-26 weeks of pregnancy, or monoclonal antibody (nirsevimab or clesrovimab) for infants and young children. Pregnant people should receive RSV vaccine from September 1st (1–2 months before the anticipated start of RSV season) through March 1st (2–3 months before the anticipated end of the RSV season), and eligible infants should receive immunization during October 1st through March 31st. Most infants will not need both maternal vaccination and infant RSV monoclonal antibodies.

For the 2026-27 season, NMDOH, in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, revised recommendations for infants and young children aged 8-19 months to include an expanded list of high-risk criteria. Infants and young children aged 8-19 months with these high-risk criteria should receive a dose of nirsevimab, regardless of the immunization status of the infant or pregnant parent in the 2025-26 season.

NMDOH recommends a single dose of RSV vaccine (either Abrysvo, Arexvy, or mResvia) for adults aged 75 years and older, as well as adults aged 50-74 who are at [increased risk of severe RSV disease](#). RSV vaccine should ideally be administered in late summer or early fall, prior to the RSV season, but can be administered at any time of the year. Adults who have received the vaccine in previous seasons do not currently need another dose. RSV vaccine can be administered at the same clinic visit as other vaccines, including influenza and COVID-19.

Treatment for Respiratory Disease



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Influenza: There are several effective antivirals that are approved for use in influenza patients. Guidance for those treatments can be found [here](#).

COVID-19: The Infectious Diseases Society of America has released updated [guidance on treatment and management of patients with COVID-19](#).

Monitor Viral Respiratory Infection Dashboard for Trends

The NMDOH Viral Respiratory Infection dashboard, updated weekly, contains a visualization and explanation of the start of season algorithm, in addition to other information regarding respiratory virus activity in New Mexico.

[NMDOH Viral Respiratory Infection Dashboard](#)

Immunization Dashboards:

Respiratory Vaccine Coverage Rates [Immunization Dashboards](#)

Vaccine Provider Locator [Immunization Dashboards](#)

Vaccine Access: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers can order respiratory presentations as needed throughout the season.

317 Providers can order for underserved adults that may be uninsured/under-insured or lack an immediate access to a provider.

Standing orders and NMDOH guidance for 2026-2027 COVID-19 vaccine are available on [the NMDOH Immunization Schedules webpage](#).

All vaccinations for children and adults are required by law to be entered into the New Mexico State Immunization Information System (NMSIIS). If you need access, training, or assistance with using NMSIIS, contact the [NMSIIS](#) Help Desk at 833-882-6454

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to Federal Communications Commission Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save this phone number (855) 596-1810 as the “New Mexico Health Alert Network” default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.