

# Starting the Conversation About Respiratory Disease Vaccination: Engaging Long-term Care (LTC) Residents and Their Caregivers



*This guide focuses on a team-centered approach to help keep older adults up to date with important respiratory vaccines*

INTENDED FOR US HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS



# Care Teams Can Play a Critical Role in Helping to Improve LTC Immunization Rates

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## Care Teams and Vaccinating Providers

- Care teams play an essential role in helping to ensure eligible adults who are residents of long-term care (LTC) facilities receive their recommended vaccinations<sup>1,2</sup>
- Care teams can be proactive in assessing immunization eligibility and providing a strong recommendation about appropriate vaccinations for older adults in congregate living settings<sup>2-4</sup>
- Opportunities to assess immunization eligibility can occur during routine medical records review or dispensing of medications for patients with certain underlying medical conditions<sup>2</sup>
- Healthcare providers can help older adults overcome vaccine hesitancy by<sup>5</sup>
  - Listening to concerns and addressing them with timely and targeted information, such as vaccine safety and efficacy
  - Educating older adults about how vaccines work and how the immune system responds to build immunity
  - Reviewing the importance of staying up to date on recommended vaccinations

LTC = long-term care.



# Stay Informed About Available Respiratory Disease Vaccines and CDC Recommendations

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## Help Ensure Eligible LTC Residents Are Up to Date

- Many LTC residents may be at elevated risk for serious respiratory illness, based on congregate living, comorbidities, and other factors, and people living in nursing homes are prioritized in CDC recommendations for vaccination against respiratory diseases<sup>6,7</sup>
- Commonly administered vaccinations include pneumococcal pneumonia, COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and flu<sup>8,9</sup>
- Vaccines can be effective in helping protect older adults living in LTC settings against serious disease, but vaccination rates among this population fall short of public health goals<sup>6</sup>
- Educate your facility HCPs about available vaccinations and recommendation updates; engage HCPs as advocates for immunization among your facility residents and their caregivers<sup>2,5</sup>
- Stay abreast of changing federal and state vaccination regulations such as the PREP Act, which could impact the immunization approach in your LTC facilities<sup>7</sup>



***Care teams and vaccinating providers play a vital role in educating LTC residents and caregivers about the importance of immunizations.<sup>2,4</sup> When providers are engaged in the conversation, vaccination uptake improves.<sup>7</sup>***

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# Engaging in Conversations With Older Adults About Recommended Immunizations

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**When older adults are hesitant to receive recommended vaccinations, it may be important to point out why vaccination is important.**

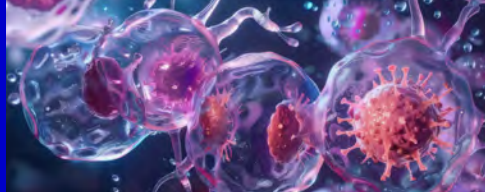
**For example:**

- *Vaccines are as important to overall health as diet and exercise and are considered one of the most effective preventive care measures available<sup>10</sup>*
- *According to the CDC, vaccines undergo a robust review and approval process to assess safety and efficacy<sup>11</sup>*
- *Vaccine-preventable diseases may cause you to miss important family events or activities you enjoy<sup>4</sup>*

**Care teams should take every opportunity to encourage older adults and their caregivers to consider vaccination.<sup>2</sup> Examples of conversation starters include:**

- *I'd like to take some time and confirm you are up to date with all recommended vaccines to help protect you from certain respiratory diseases.*
- *Has a doctor ever discussed the risk of vaccine-preventable respiratory diseases or infection with you?*
- *Let's talk about which vaccines you may be missing that can help protect you from certain respiratory diseases.*
- *Did you know that—in addition to flu—you may be at risk for several other respiratory conditions and that there are vaccines to help protect you?*
- *Based on your history, I would like to speak with you today about the vaccines that may be recommended for you.*

# Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)



## Why are LTC residents at risk for RSV?

- Although RSV is often thought of as a disease that affects infants, adults 60 years and older—including those with certain chronic medical conditions, such as chronic heart or lung disease or weakened immune system—are also at risk of severe RSV-related illness<sup>12,13</sup>
- Residence in a nursing home is associated with an increased risk of severe RSV disease<sup>13</sup>
- RSV leads to an estimated 60,000 to 160,000 hospitalizations in US adults aged 65 years and older and ~6000 to 10,000 deaths annually<sup>12</sup>
- A history of certain chronic conditions and age  $\geq 75$  years were the strongest independent risk factors for RSV-associated hospitalization<sup>12</sup>

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## Who should be vaccinated against RSV?

- The CDC recommends a single dose of any FDA-approved RSV vaccine for all adults aged  $\geq 75$  years<sup>13</sup>
- The CDC also recommends vaccination for adults aged 60-74 years who are at increased risk, including persons with certain medical conditions, such as cardiovascular or lung disease, end-stage renal disease, or severe diabetes mellitus, persons with moderate or severe immune compromise, and persons living in nursing homes<sup>13\*</sup>

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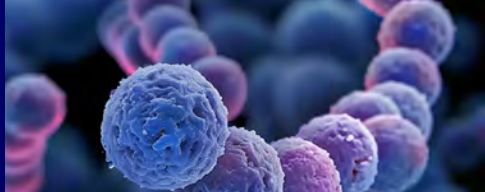
## Consider these conversation starters about RSV vaccination:

- *Based on your age, you are eligible for an RSV vaccine. A single dose of this vaccine is recommended by the CDC to help protect nursing home residents from lower respiratory tract infections.*
- *Let's consider any risk factors that you may have for RSV.*

\*See here for the CDC list of risk factors: <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/hcp/clinical-overview/>.<sup>14</sup>

CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; FDA = U.S. Food and Drug Administration; LTC = long-term care.

# Pneumococcal Pneumonia



## Why are LTC residents at risk for pneumococcal pneumonia?

- Adults  $\geq 50$  years of age have higher risk for pneumococcal pneumonia, as do adults with certain chronic conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes<sup>15</sup>
  - Pneumococcal pneumonia results in >180,000 adult hospital admissions in the US each year; about two-thirds are among people aged  $\geq 65$ <sup>16\*</sup>
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## Who should be vaccinated against pneumococcal pneumonia?

- The CDC recommends adults aged  $\geq 50$  years—including some people with a history of previous vaccination—get immunized against pneumococcal pneumonia<sup>17</sup>
  - The CDC also recommends adults 19-49 with certain chronic conditions and/or risk factors get pneumococcal vaccination. Conditions that can increase risk include chronic heart, liver, or lung disease; diabetes; or a weakened immune system.<sup>8,18†</sup>
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## Consider these conversation starters about pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination:

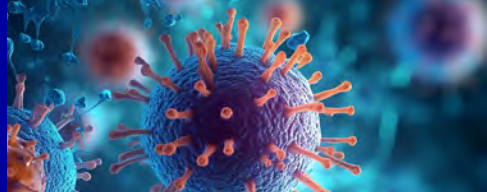
- *Did you know that certain chronic health conditions increase your risk for pneumococcal pneumonia?*
- *Based on your age, you are eligible for a pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination.*
- *Did you know that, even if you received a vaccination for pneumococcal pneumonia in the past, you may be eligible for a different vaccine?*

\*Extrapolated to year-2019 US population estimates.<sup>16</sup>

†See here for the CDC list of risk factors: <https://www.cdc.gov/pneumonia/risk-factors/index.html>.<sup>18</sup>

CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; LTC = long-term care.

# COVID-19



## Why are LTC residents at risk for COVID-19?

- According to the CDC, it is especially important for people to get a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine if they are aged 65 years and older, are at high risk for severe COVID-19, or have never received a COVID-19 vaccine<sup>19</sup>
- During the 2024-2025 season, as of 12/28/2024, people  $\geq 65$  years old were hospitalized at a cumulative rate of 120 people per 100,000 population<sup>20</sup>
- During the 2023-2024 respiratory virus season, adults aged  $\geq 65$  years accounted for 70% of all COVID-19-associated hospitalizations, and approximately 1 in 6 of these hospitalized adults was a nursing home resident<sup>21</sup>

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## Who should be vaccinated against COVID-19?

- The CDC recommends all adults get a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine, including people who previously received a COVID-19 vaccine or had COVID-19, adults 65+, and individuals who are moderately or severely immunocompromised<sup>22</sup>
  - Everyone aged 5-64 years, **including people who live and work in LTC settings**, is recommended to get 1 dose of a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine
  - Everyone aged 65 years and older, **including people who live and work in LTC settings**, is recommended to get 2 doses of a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine 6 months apart
  - People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised should get at least 2 doses of a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine 6 months apart. A healthcare provider may recommend more age-appropriate doses, beyond 2 doses at least 2 months apart. Patients can self-confirm as moderately or severely immunocompromised.

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## Consider these conversation starters about COVID-19 vaccination:

- *Have you ever been diagnosed with COVID-19?*
- *When was your last COVID-19 vaccine?*
- *Do you know if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccination? The CDC recommends everyone receive a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine whether or not they have previously been vaccinated. Dose should be given at least 2 months after the last dose of any COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>22</sup>*

# Make Strong Recommendations to Help Ensure Older Adults Residing in LTC Settings Are Up to Date on Immunizations



## Vaccinating HCPs, care teams, infection preventionists, and other staff members should proactively assess residents' eligibility for available respiratory disease vaccinations

- Validate each patient's eligibility and risk based on vaccination history, age, underlying medical conditions, and residence in a nursing home<sup>3,4</sup>
- Educate older adults and their caregivers about eligibility and address questions or concerns about vaccinations<sup>5</sup>
- Vaccinate eligible adults after recommending appropriate immunizations and coadminister vaccinations if appropriate<sup>4,8</sup>
- Ensure there is a follow-up plan for any vaccinations not administered<sup>4</sup>

HCP = healthcare provider; LTC = long-term care.

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