

# Promoting Uptake of COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV Vaccines for Fall 2023

## Executive Summary

Fall 2023 marks the first time that vaccines for three respiratory illnesses—COVID-19, seasonal influenza (flu), and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)—will be available simultaneously. If taken, these vaccines can mitigate increases in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths that could strain the healthcare system, negatively impact the economy, and add to stress for individuals and families over the coming months. While many vaccination strategies apply to all three illnesses, each has distinct characteristics that warrant some variation in emphasis:

### UPDATED COVID-19 VACCINES

The context for the updated vaccines includes low uptake for the 2022 vaccine booster. The strategy for the updated vaccines needs to include communicating their value and benefit and facilitating access now that the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency has ended.

### FLU

The flu vaccine has been available for decades, but uptake has historically been low, with variation by age, race, sex, and other factors. As with the updated COVID-19 vaccine, the strategy for the flu vaccine needs to include communicating the associated risks and benefits and addressing systemic issues related to access.

### RSV

The RSV vaccines are new, currently recommended for certain adults 60 years of age and older. Because of the newness of these vaccines, it is necessary to educate the public about their value, risks, and benefits, their efficacy and safety, and facilitate access.

### ABOUT THIS RAPID EXPERT CONSULTATION

State, tribal, local, and territorial authorities can be instrumental in promoting these vaccines. This rapid expert consultation describes vaccination strategies for fall 2023 that are based on current research in science communication, decision making, sociology, anthropology, and social psychology.

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## KEY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR FALL 2023

### COMMUNICATE WITH TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS

Openly communicating about vaccines development processes, testing for safety and efficacy, and updates to the vaccines and recommendations fosters trust and boosts vaccine acceptance, even if such transparency involves communicating negative aspects or recognizing unknowns that might temporarily affect uptake.

### USE NEW DATA TO HIGHLIGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INFECTION

Highlighting new evidence or events that warrant people accepting vaccines when they have previously chosen not to is a way to encourage such change without derogating people's previous decisions to avoid vaccination. When doing this, it is crucial to frame the information, so it aligns with the target audience's worldviews, while also emphasizing their susceptibility to infection and the consequences of not vaccinating.

### USE TRUSTED MESSENGERS

The source of the information plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of health messages. Engaging trusted community figures, from health care providers to local leaders (such as faith leaders), has proven effective in promoting vaccine uptake, as their long-established trust within communities can make their recommendations highly influential.

### TACKLE MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Misinformation and disinformation about vaccines is common, especially on social media. Countering this involves disseminating consistent, clear, visible, and accessible information through trusted channels, optimizing online content for easy discovery, and highlighting medical consensus on vaccine safety.

## STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES

### ENSURE EQUITY IN VACCINE ACCESSIBILITY

Making vaccines as widely available as possible is key to increasing vaccine uptake, especially among those who have historically been and remain marginalized and maybe at higher risk of negative outcomes of not being vaccinated. Ensuring equity entails addressing health disparities and structural barriers, such as by making vaccines available beyond traditional health care settings. Given that insurance coverage for vaccination may vary, people should be advised that checking in advance if they are covered is wise. People should also be provided information on locations where free vaccinations are available.

### IMPROVE PROVIDER-AND SYSTEM-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Health care providers and systems can significantly influence vaccination rates through multifaceted interventions that can include patient reminders, provider education, use of electronic health records, and implementation of standing orders.

### INCREASE COMMUNITY DEMAND

Community demand for vaccines, especially among marginalized populations, can be increased through culturally sensitive, community-based campaigns and educational interventions delivered by trusted community leaders.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

This Rapid Expert Consultation Summary was prepared by the Societal Experts Action Network based on the Rapid Expert Consultation *Promoting Uptake of COVID-19, Influenza and RSV Vaccines for Fall 2023 (2023)*.

To read the full rapid expert consultation, please visit <http://www.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27261/>

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