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## **Protecting Yourself and Others with Vaccinations**

As the leaves change color and the air turns crisp, respiratory illness season is approaching. This time of year is not just about pumpkin spice and cozy sweaters. It's time to think about protecting ourselves from getting sick. The best way to protect ourselves from respiratory illness is with [vaccinations](#). Vaccines can help protect from flu, RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), COVID-19 and pneumococcal pneumonia. These vaccines are available free of charge to Veterans receiving care at VA.

For Veterans, staying healthy is especially important. Many Veterans have underlying health conditions. These conditions can make illnesses like the flu, RSV, COVID-19 or bacterial pneumonia far more dangerous. They can lead to serious complications, especially in older adults and those with compromised immune systems.

By taking the simple step of getting vaccinated, you'll protect yourself and those around you. Most people have either mild side effects or no side effects after getting a vaccine. Some of the most common side effects are arm pain or swelling, headache and fatigue. These effects should not last more than 1 or 2 days.

You might have questions about vaccines, such as:

1. What vaccines are recommended for me this season?
2. How else can I stay healthy and keep from getting sick?
3. Can I receive all recommended vaccines at once, or should they be spaced out?

Your VA health care provider can help you answer these questions. You can [call your local VA](#) to learn when and where you can get vaccines. You can also send a secure message to your provider through [My HealtheVet](#).

Flu, COVID-19, RSV and pneumococcal vaccines are also available at VA's network of over 70,000 community pharmacies and urgent care locations nationwide. If you choose to get a vaccine outside of VA, let them know you're a Veteran enrolled in VA

health care and bring [this billing information card](#) with you. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines do not require a prescription at VA network locations. For help with in-network community shots, call 877-881-7618 or your [local VA facility](#). Learn more about [no-cost shots](#).

If you received your vaccines outside of VA, we encourage you to share this information with your VA health care team. You can do this by adding your vaccine information to your My HealtheVet health summary for your own records. To add your information, you'll need a premium My HealtheVet account. [Learn more about managing your COVID-19 vaccine records online](#).

If you don't receive VA health care and are interested in applying, you can [learn more about eligibility and benefits](#).

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