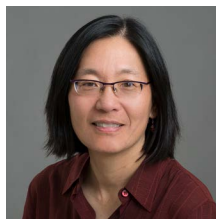


A healthier today RUSH Generations and a vital tomorrow



Your Health

New Vaccines Offer Protection This Winter



Beverly Sha, MD
Infectious disease physician

COVID-19, RSV and the flu virus are forecast to overlap this season — but for the first time, there are vaccines to protect against all three.

Along with the annually updated flu vaccine, updated COVID-19 vaccines are designed to better protect against more recent

strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get both shots.

Also new this year: a vaccination that protects older adults against RSV. It's one of the most common viruses, and causes a significant number of hospitalizations among vulnerable adults and very young children.

COVID-19 is still here

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has mutated several times over since it first appeared in December 2019. Updated vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna, plus a new vaccine from Novavax, are tailored to better combat recent variants.

These COVID-19 vaccines are being administered at pharmacies, local health departments, health clinics, some doctors' offices and other vaccine distribution sites nationwide.

"I'm telling my patients to get the updated vaccine. If they sat out the last booster, their levels of protection are quite low," said infectious disease physician **Beverly Sha, MD**, whose research includes COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials at RUSH. "With a newer vaccine that addresses newer variants, there's even more reason to get it now."

Some patients are still concerned about safety, Sha added. "But it is really like the flu vaccine model: Everything is the same but the variant, so all of the safety data — from billions of doses — tells us these vaccines are very safe."

Game-changing protection against RSV

One of the most common respiratory viruses went unnoticed by most people for years — until last winter, when a surge in cases contributed to children's hospital beds being filled across the country. Yet RSV, short for respiratory syncytial virus, affects people of all ages, and is the leading cause of lower respiratory tract infections like bronchiolitis and pneumonia.

In the great majority of cases, especially among adults, RSV does not cause major illness, and the symptoms may mimic a cold. But RSV can be more severe in infants, older adults and people who have asthma, heart and lung disease, compromised immunity and other health conditions, or who live in a long-term care facility.

Earlier this year, two RSV vaccines were approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). People age 60 and older are eligible to get vaccinated if they want to reduce their risk of RSV infection. Talk to your primary care provider to determine whether the RSV vaccine makes sense for you.

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Join us on Feb. 21 for a discussion on coping with long COVID-19. See the calendar insert for details.

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New Year, New Approach to Alcohol?



Nancy Reau, MD
Hepatologist

If you're thinking about joining the popular "Dry January" challenge to take a break from wine, beer or liquor, RUSH hepatologist **Nancy Reau, MD**, thinks it's a great idea.

"Although one month doesn't sound like a big deal, research suggests that decreasing alcohol use for a month gives us insight into our overall alcohol use," Reau says. "That insight can help lessen future problematic drinking."

From better sleep and more energy to improved blood pressure and weight loss, your body can experience immediate short-term benefits by going without alcohol for 30 days. You may even enjoy the benefits enough to cut back on alcohol or eliminate it entirely.

Consider your risks

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes moderate drinking as one alcoholic beverage a day for women, two for men. One drink equals a 12-ounce glass of beer, a 1.5-ounce shot of distilled spirits, such as whiskey, or a 5-ounce glass of wine.

The CDC notes that drinking within these

recommended limits may still increase the overall risk of death from various causes, including breast cancer and other cancers, and heart and vascular diseases. For some types of cancer, the risk increases even when drinking less than one drink per day.

"Alcohol consumption can cause damage to the liver, heart and pancreas. It's also linked to several types of cancers and can weaken the immune system or worsen depression and anxiety," Reau says, adding that the impact is worsened when combined with other health issues, including obesity.

"It's most important to look at your own personal health 'report card' and realize that if you have any medical conditions, trying to find a safe zone for alcohol is going to be challenging," says Reau, who is the Richard B. Capps chair of hepatology and a professor at RUSH Medical College.

Most important, she added, is that patients and physicians understand that effective behavioral therapies and medications are available to address unhealthy drinking habits or alcohol use disorder.

"If someone tries to cut out alcohol for a month or longer and struggles, your doctor can help you find effective treatment," she says.

Join us on March 20 for a discussion on kidney and liver health. See the calendar insert for details.



Staying Safe, Staying Active



What matters most to many of us during the winter is staying safe from harsh temperatures and icy roads — but choosing to stay home more can lead to becoming less active.

While it's important to protect yourself from the risks of winter, it's also beneficial for physical and mental health to stay active year-round. Benefits of activity, some of which can be extra important during the cold winter months, include the following, according to experts:

- Improvement in mood
- Higher energy level
- Lower risk of falling
- Prevention of strain injuries
- Lower risk of high blood pressure
- Better control of diabetic symptoms

To encourage you to stay both safe and active this season, RUSH Generations offers several programs you can join from the comfort of home. Check out the calendar insert for information about workshops like A Matter of Balance and Gentle Chair Yoga.

Visit Schaalman Senior Voices at aging.rush.edu/Schaalman to see videos on what matters most to older adults — like Diane, who says that following tai chi and other exercise videos on her tablet helps her stay healthy. You can even record your own video at bit.ly/RecordMyStory.

Healthy Holiday Eating



Jessica Kass, MD
Family physician

The holidays are a time for family, friends and celebrating with many delicious and special foods. One thing nobody celebrates is the fact that for many people, holiday meals can cause stomach upset, including intestinal discomfort, acid reflux, indigestion, heartburn and more.

Jessica Kass, MD, a family physician with RUSH Copley Medical Group, has a few tips for keeping your digestive health in check this holiday season.

Make healthy choices

Know what constitutes a healthy diet and choose wisely when you're facing tables full of food. Holidays and weight gain often go hand in hand. To avoid putting on unwanted pounds, go for fruits, vegetables and a variety of protein, including fish, lean meat, poultry, eggs, beans, peas, nuts and seeds.

Keep trans fats — found in margarines, processed foods, crackers, cookies and fast foods — to a minimum. Unsaturated fats are better choices. These include avocado, peanut butter, nuts and seeds. Choose whole grains found in barley, oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat breads and pastas over refined fibers like those in enriched pastas, white breads and white rice.

Alcohol and sweetened beverages

What's a holiday celebration without a toast? Kass advises consuming alcohol in moderation, limiting yourself to no more than a drink or two a day. Moderation is also key with soft drinks, sweetened beverages and coffee. Water is always a good option.

Irritable bowel syndrome and the holidays

If you're one of the 10 to 15% of Americans with irritable bowel syndrome, commonly known as IBS, be warned that symptoms like gut pain or discomfort accompanied by diarrhea,

constipation or both, can get worse over the holidays because of unhealthy foods and stress.

Kass recommends sticking to a routine over the holidays, asking about ingredients in cooked foods and identifying triggers for your symptoms.

"If meatballs are a trigger, eat smaller portions or avoid them altogether," she says. "If you're lactose intolerant, keep Lactaid tablets with you. Stay hydrated to prevent constipation. Know your body and don't overdo it."

Her other recommendations:

- Stay away from caffeine and carbonated beverages, which cause gas and heartburn, and consider tea as an alternative.
- Don't overeat (it takes four to five hours for food to go through the small intestine).
- Use docusate or MiraLAX for constipation.
- If you have diarrhea, Imodium can help but you should also check with others who attended the same celebration. Often, food is left out at buffets longer than it should be, increasing risk for infection associated with diarrhea.

Avoid acid reflux

Acid reflux symptoms include a burning in the chest or upper abdomen, sore throat, belching, hoarseness and difficulty swallowing. Large meals exacerbate symptoms, so she recommends eating less at each sitting.

Other tips include quitting smoking and avoid-



ing triggers like spicy and fatty foods, tomatoes, citrus, alcohol, onion, chocolate and caffeine. Don't wear tight clothes or lie down for three hours after eating. When going to bed, use pillows to elevate your head four to six inches.

Relieve heartburn

Need to relieve and prevent heartburn? Use antacids like Tums or Pepcid as needed. For more severe cases, Prilosec and similar medications are available over the counter but should be taken continuously for at least two weeks, rather than as needed.

Helpful holiday tips

In general, Kass recommends the following to stay healthy and feel great this holiday season:

- Be active, get plenty of sleep and control stress.
- Snack wisely.
- Watch portion sizes, use a smaller plate and practice mindful eating.
- Bring a healthy dish to a potluck.
- Limit desserts.

With a little forethought and wise eating, you and your digestive system can enjoy the holidays!

Join us on March 6 for a discussion on nutrition. See the calendar insert for details.

RUSH Generations

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(800) 757-0202



PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of RUSH. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of RUSH. RUSH is an academic health system comprising RUSH University Medical Center, RUSH Copley Medical Center and RUSH Oak Park Hospital.

3 Surprising Ways to Protect Your Heart

Diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure are common links to heart disease, but many people develop heart disease without having any of these risk factors. Now, researchers are looking beyond the obvious. “If we can figure out other reasons people are developing heart disease, we can create new ways to fight heart disease,” says **Melissa Tracy, MD**, a cardiologist at RUSH. These three tips can not only help prevent heart disease, but also keep you healthier in general.

1. Take good care of your teeth.

Brushing and flossing regularly and visiting the dentist twice a year can prevent endocarditis, a serious condition in which bacteria from the bloodstream causes infection and damage to heart valves.

2. Take vitamin C.

Vitamin C helps the body produce collagen, a protein needed for healthy blood vessels. Doctors recommend 500 to 700 mg of vitamin C daily; supplements can help, but it's better to get your vitamin C through foods like oranges, kiwi, broccoli and kale.

3. Ditch plastics with BPA.

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a compound used to make certain plastics. Some studies indicate that children exposed to high levels of BPA have increased risk of heart disease. Opt for BPA-free products, and never microwave or heat up anything in plastic: Heat can cause plastic to break down and let BPA leach into food.

**Join us on Feb. 7 for a discussion on heart disease.
See the calendar insert for details.**

A healthier today
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Winter 2024 Free Health and Aging Events

The following lectures will be held virtually. You can view them online or listen to them via phone. Lectures typically last about one hour. For updates on RUSH Generations programs, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.



To join these lectures online,

visit the RUSH Generations YouTube page at the time of the event:

cutt.ly/RushGenYouTube.



To dial in via phone (audio only):

Call **(312) 626-6799** at the time of the event and enter **meeting ID 413 655 0125#**.

January

What Matters in the New Year

Wednesday, Jan. 3

1 p.m.

There are plenty of ways you can kick off 2024 on the right foot! Schaalman Senior Voices and RUSH Generations partner to bring you this conversation about how to begin the new year with a fresh start. We'll discuss ways to empower yourself, manage your stress and reflect on what matters most to you in the new year.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration

Wednesday, Jan. 17

11:30 a.m. (please note special start time)

Join us for an event in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, where we'll highlight Dr. King's call for all of us to make change in the community. Our panel of speakers will discuss the importance of relationships in creating social change, along with the health benefits of getting involved in issues we care about.

February

Older Adults and Heart Disease

Wednesday, Feb. 7

1 p.m.

February is American Heart Month! This lecture will offer insights into how to live a heart-healthy lifestyle, avoid heart disease and reduce your risk of a heart attack.

Coping with Long COVID-19

Wednesday, Feb. 21

1 p.m.

Many people who had the COVID-19 virus continue to suffer from health issues, or have developed new issues related to their illness. Join us to learn about common symptoms along with information about the comprehensive care and resources available at RUSH and across Chicagoland.

March

Nutrition Needs and Healthy Eating

Wednesday, March 6

1 p.m.

For National Nutrition Month, we invite you to hear from nutrition experts about how nutrition needs change as we age. We'll discuss the best strategies for good nutrition and how to develop healthful habits around eating and physical activity.

Kidney and Liver Health

Wednesday, March 20

1 p.m.

Come learn about how to keep your kidneys and liver healthy as you age. Our panel of experts will discuss common liver and kidney problems, health screening information, disease prevention and how to manage chronic conditions.

Classes and Workshops

These classes and workshops are a mix of Zoom and in-person events.

To participate in Zoom events, you'll need internet access and the Zoom app on a computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam. Please call **(800) 757-0202** and be ready to provide a valid phone number and email address so we can send you a Zoom link. If you don't have access to Zoom but would like to join a self-guided version of a workshop with a weekly conference call check-in, please call **(800) 757-0202**.

To participate in in-person events, pre-registration is required. Please call **(800) 757-0202** to reserve your spot.

For updates from RUSH Generations, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

Classes

Gentle Chair Yoga (Zoom)

Thursdays, Jan. 11 to Feb. 15
11 a.m. to noon
\$30 for the six-class session

Embracing Aging (Zoom)

Mondays, Feb. 19 to March 25
1 to 2 p.m.
\$30 for the six-class session

Art for Emotional Wellness (in person)

Tuesdays, March 12 to April 16
1 to 3 p.m.
Armour Academic Center
600 S. Paulina St., Suite 1096
Chicago, IL 60612

Workshops

A Matter of Balance (Zoom)

Mondays and Wednesdays,
Jan. 15 to Feb. 12
10 a.m. to noon

Advanced Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention (Zoom)

Wednesdays and Fridays,
Jan. 31 to March 22
11 a.m. to noon

Take Charge of Your Health (in person)

Tuesdays, Feb. 6 to March 12
9:30 am. to noon
Johnston R. Bowman Health Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 316
Chicago, IL 60612

Walk With Ease (in person)

Wednesdays, Thursdays
and Fridays, Feb. 21 to March 29
1 to 2:30 p.m.
Garfield Park Conservatory
300 N. Central Park Ave.
Chicago, IL 60624

Learning To Live Well With Chronic Pain (in person)

Thursdays, March 7 to April 11
12:30 to 3 p.m.
Johnston R. Bowman Health Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 316
Chicago, IL 60612

Both RUSH University Medical Center and RUSH Oak Park Hospital comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Polski (Polish)

UWAGA: jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

繁體中文 (Chinese)

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한국어 (Korean)

주의: 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 언어 지원 서비스를 무료로 이용하실 수 있습니다. 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)번으로 전화해 주십시오.

Tagalog

PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

العربية (Arabic)

ملاحظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية متاحة لك مجاناً. اتصل بالرقم 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Русский (Russian)

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните по телефону 1-312-563-2987 (телетайп: 1-312-563-2987).

ગુજરાતી (Gujarati)

સૂચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિ:શુલ્ક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

وُردُا (Urdu)

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Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)

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हिंदी (Hindi)

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λληνικά (Greek)

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Deutsch (German)

ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).