

# NMDOH News Brief

# IMMUNIZATION



NM Department of Health Immunization Program

Fall 2023 / Issue No. 21

## Preparing for Respiratory Season

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The fall season has begun and along with the colorful leaves and colder weather we can expect respiratory illnesses. Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV all spread easily during the winter months and can cause serious illness, especially among the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions. Vaccination helps reduce severe illness and the risk of hospitalization. There are several new vaccines and recommendations to be aware of, and the vaccines are summarized, by illness, below.

### Influenza

CDC continues to recommend that everyone 6 months and older get an annual influenza vaccine. This is because the influenza virus mutates each year, sometimes in minor ways and sometimes in major ways. The best way to prevent influenza

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## Season of Partnerships!

### NMDOH Vaccine Dashboard

This season, the NM Department of Health has developed an [online dashboard](#) to help the public find vaccine locations in their area. The new dashboard features an interactive map that shows vaccination locations, which vaccines are available, and how to contact the location or schedule an appointment.

The map serves as a centralized platform reflecting vaccine access in New Mexico communities, through our valued partnerships with

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CDC's new campaign to educate about the flu

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# Adult Vaccination Toolkit UPDATED

Maggie June, BA, CHT  
New Mexico  
Immunization Coaliton

An updated Adult Vaccination toolkit incorporates the new DOH "Don't Wait, Vaccinate!" marketing effort and will soon be available online, stay tuned.

Working with Vanessa Hansel, Adult Vaccine Manager at the Immunization Program, the goal was to give the toolkit a new fall/winter "look" for the upcoming respiratory season.

Here are the items:



## Immunization Program Staffing announcements

**Scarlett Swanson, BSc**  
Compliance Coordinator



We are pleased to announce that Scarlett Swanson has been promoted to the position of Compliance Coordinator at the Immunization Program in Santa Fe.

Scarlett was previously the Immunization Health Educator for the Northeast Region, a position she had

held since 2014. Scarlett brings extensive vaccine knowledge and experience to her new role.

Congratulations Scarlett!



## Rollout of new COVID-19 vaccine and transition to commercialization

On September 11, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved authorization for emergency use of updated COVID-19 vaccines. The new monovalent formulation targets the current circulating variants to provide better protection against serious consequences of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death. With the new approval, the bivalent Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines are no longer

authorized for use in the US.

Transition to commercialization of COVID-19 vaccine also occurred. COVID-19 vaccine is now available under the Federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program and 317 Adult Bridge Funds. Under VFC, vaccines are available at no cost to children 6 months-18 years. 317 Adult Bridge Funds provide vaccine for uninsured and underinsured adults. CVS, Walgreens, and pharmacies under eTrueNorth are part of the Bridge funds program as well as Public Health Offices under the NM Department



of Health. For more information on Bridge Access Program visit [Bridge Access Program | CDC](#).

## Community Outreaches

### PUEBLO OF NAMBE

The Pueblo of Nambe hosted a health fair at their Wellness Center on August 9, from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm. The Department of Health was invited to the event, including the Immunization Program. Many community members attended the health fair and visited the information tables. Immunization Program staff had vaccine materials on hand to give out as educational resources, and staff also provided guidance to folks on how to look up their vaccine record on [vaxviewnm.org](#).

### INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY DAY

The Santa Fe Indigenous Center hosted the 2023 Indigenous

Community Day on September 16 from 12 pm to 4 pm at Ragle Park in Santa Fe. The event featured a number of activities that occurred throughout the day. The Department of Health was invited to participate; staff from the Immunization Program attended to provide materials and educational resources for all ages.



*In attendance at the 2023 Indigenous Community Day: Vaccine and Outreach Manager Joelle Jacobs and Compliance Coordinator Scarlett Swanson.*



*In attendance of the Pueblo of Nambe Health Fair: NMSIIS Trainer Lyndsey Cordova, and CDC PHAP Catherine Campbell.*



*In attendance of the Pueblo of Nambe Health Fair: CDC Public Health Advisor Edward Wake, NMSIIS Trainer Lyndsey Cordova, and CDC PHAP Catherine Campbell.*



**Respiratory Season**  
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disease is to be vaccinated. Infants 6 months through 8 years will need two doses a month apart during their first year to be vaccinated or if they have not previously received 2 or more doses.

People older than 65 can receive any version of the flu vaccine that is age appropriate; however, there is a preference for a high dose, recombinant or adjuvanted dose of vaccine, if available.

New this year, CDC recommends that folks with an egg allergy can receive any version of the flu vaccine that is age appropriate for them and to which they have no contraindications.

In NM and in the southern United States, we are already seeing signs of an early Influenza season!

## COVID-19

The 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccine is formulated to target the Omicron XBB.1.5 variant and is available in pharmacies and provider offices. This vaccine is monovalent; however, in clinical trials, it was effective at protecting against other new

variants like the emerging EG.5 and BA.2.86.

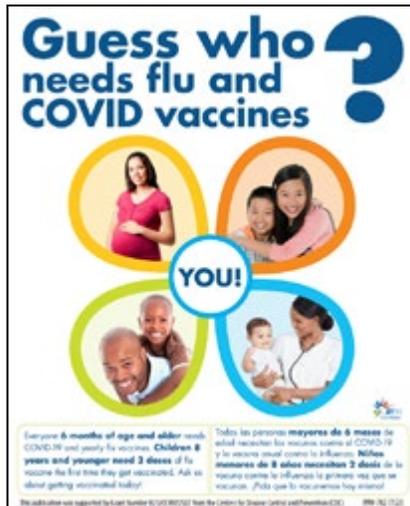
***CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get a dose of this vaccine.*** Those who are especially vulnerable to complications from COVID-19 include older adults (75+) and young children. People with risk factors such as obesity, heart disease, lung disease, asthma, and diabetes, are also especially encouraged to get vaccinated.

If a person has recently had COVID-19 disease, or if they recently had the bivalent booster, it may be prudent to wait 3+ months to get the updated 23-24 vaccine. Having recent exposure to COVID either

through infection or vaccination should offer protection from reinfection for several months. Waiting 3+ months will help optimize the body's immune response to the vaccine.

New this season, COVID-19 vaccine is no longer provided through the federal public health emergency. Now insurance companies will cover the cost of the vaccine. People who do not have insurance

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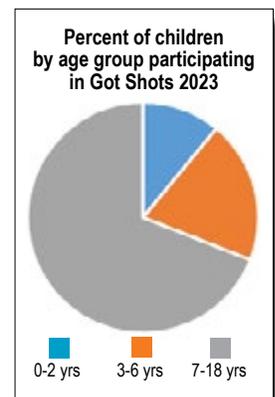


## Got Shots 2023 wrap up

This year, Got Shots events took place July 8-August 31. We had 88 providers from around the state participating in 28/33 counties! The clinics provided many opportunities for children to get vaccinated without cost to the parent and most without an appointment.

With 80% of the clinics sending in feedback, we have had over 3,150 children who received over 7,220 vaccines! This is a large increase over last year's events, about 30% higher for both the number of children and the number of vaccines. Approximately 11% of the children were ages 0-2, about 20% were ages 3-6, and 69% were ages 7-18.

This annual effort has existed for over 20 years. Parents and communities appreciate the opportunity to get their children vaccinated before school starts. We thank the providers who offered this valuable service to New Mexico's parents!



## Respiratory Season

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can still get vaccinated at no charge through the federal bridge program. *Note: The Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) will include COVID-19 vaccine for children 6 months to 18 years.*

Currently there are two mRNA vaccines, Comirnaty and Spikevax, that are authorized by the FDA and recommended by the CDC. A third vaccine by Novavax is awaiting approval and is anticipated to be available later this fall. Novavax is a recombinant, adjuvanted vaccine that targets the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein and will likely be approved for people aged 12 and older.

## Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

RSV is a viral illness that affects almost all children by age two. Unfortunately, infection does not confer lifelong immunity, so

adolescents and adults can also come down with RSV—most have mild symptoms similar to a cold. Most hospitalizations and deaths from RSV are in older adults, those with comorbidities and babies <1 year of age.

Two new vaccines, Abrysvo and Arexvy, are available to protect people 60+ against RSV using shared clinical decision making. Factors to take into consideration include advanced age, frailty, living in a nursing home or LTCF, heart disease, lung disease, obesity, diabetes, immune compromise, kidney or liver disorders, or neurological conditions, all of which increase the risk of complications from RSV. Discussion with the health care provider can help determine whether the vaccine is appropriate for a patient over age 60.

For infants, there are now two ways to protect them from RSV in the first year of life. First, Abrysvo has also been approved for use in pregnant people

between 32-36-weeks gestation during the targeted RSV season. Vaccinating during pregnancy allows maternal antibodies to be transferred to the infant before birth, thereby offering good protection to the infant during the first 3-6 months of life. Second, there is now a monoclonal antibody treatment, Nirsevimab, that has been recommended at birth for infants born during or entering the RSV season (Oct. 1-Mar. 31) and for all infants <8 months who are born before RSV season and are entering their first RSV season. Infants 9-19 months, who are at higher risk for complications from RSV, may need a second dose to protect against RSV in the second season. Nirsevimab can be given at the same visit as other childhood vaccines.

## Pneumococcal Disease

It's important to remember to give pneumococcal vaccine to those over 65, and to those with comorbidities that increase the risk of severe disease. There are two conjugate vaccines, PCV15 and PCV20, that are available both for infants and for adults 65+, and for those with health factors that put them at higher risk.

For those who have never received pneumococcal vaccine: If PCV20 is given at age 65+, then

New Immunizations to Protect Against Severe RSV		
Who Does It Protect?	Type of Product	Is it for Everyone in Group?
 Adults 60 and over	RSV vaccine	Talk to your doctor first
 Babies	RSV antibody given to baby	All infants entering or born during RSV season. Small group of older babies for second season.
 Babies	RSV vaccine given during pregnancy	

www.cdc.gov/rsv



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the person is complete and does not need further doses. If PCV15 is given at 65+, then PPSV23 should be given a year later.

For those who have received pneumococcal vaccine before 65, then boosting at 65 is recommended, making sure there is an appropriate interval

between doses. The timing of pneumococcal vaccine is tricky, so consult CDC's guidance, [Pneumococcal Vaccine Recommendations](#).

The same vaccines, PCV15 or PCV20 are recommended for all infants at 2-, 4-, 6- and 15 months. Pneumococcal vaccines for infants not only protect those infants but also, to some extent, their older adult contacts.

Vaccines are our best defense against these respiratory diseases, and CDC states that all three vaccines can be safely given at the same visit. There are also behavioral factors that bear repeating:

May we all have a happy and healthy fall/winter season!

- Handwashing
- Wearing masks in public indoor spaces
- Staying home when sick
- Staying away from others who are sick

### Vaccine Dashboard *continued from page 1*

vaccine providers around the state.

Community members just scroll past the map to the section to register, then choose a time and location to schedule their vaccines. This is a great tool for New Mexicans to use for the upcoming respiratory season.

If a person needs to access their or their child's shot record, they can go to [VaxviewNM.org](http://VaxviewNM.org). The NM Dept of Health Call Center is available to assist with scheduling vaccination

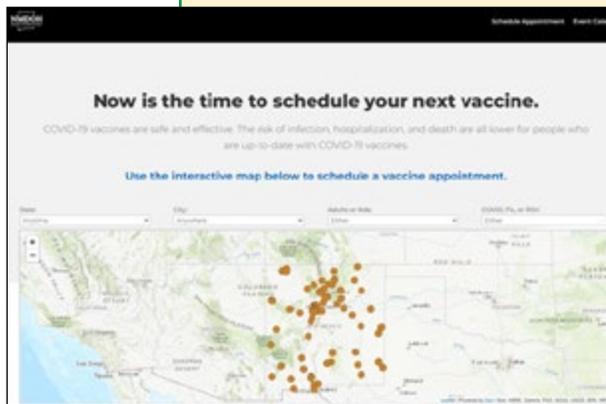
appointments, at 1-855-600-3453, option 3. The Call Center is available Monday through Friday 7 am to 8 pm, Saturdays and Sundays 10 am to 4 pm.

**HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FLU, RSV, COVID-19, AND THE COMMON COLD**

Common symptoms may include cough, headaches, sneezing, runny nose, and congestion. Different symptoms may include:

	COLD	FLU	COVID-19	RSV
ACHES	●●	***	●●	●
DIFFICULTY BREATHING	●	●	***	●●
FATIGUE	●●	***	***	●
FEVER	●	***	●●	●●
LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL	●	●	●●	●
SORE THROAT	***	●●	***	●
WHEEZING	●	●	●	***

[www.nfid.org/resources](http://www.nfid.org/resources)



## Vaccinating for Respiratory Season: Breathe Easy

On September 26, NMIC, in partnership with Comagine Health and the New Mexico Department of Health, hosted an online webinar, Vaccinating for Respiratory Season: Breathe Easy. Our speakers were Drs. Amy Bachyrycz, of UNM College of Pharmacy, and Melissa Martinez, internal medicine physician at UNM.

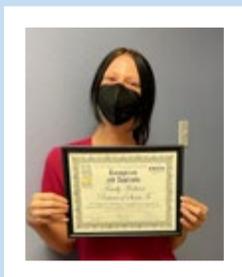
If you missed this webinar, you can now view it online, [click here](#) to access the recording. Please note the passcode: &5UCSCP2

## Photo Gallery

### *Provider award winners in the Northeast Region*

Scarlett Swanson, Compliance Coordinator in the NE Region, hand-delivered these providers their awards to honor Family Medicine Partners of New Mexico and The Children's Clinic of Los Alamos and Whiterock.

We applaud these offices for their excellent effort in vaccinating children!



## Tribal Health Data Convening

On August 29-30, the Tribal Health Data Convening took place at Isleta Resort and Casino. The goal of the convening was to discuss ideas of how to strengthen tribal data quality, access, and data sharing. In attendance was Immunization Program Manager Andrea Romero, NMSIIS Manager Katie Cruz, and CDC Public Health Associate Edward Wake.

The group heard from a panel of tribal data users, participated in breakout group sessions to brainstorm ideas, and attended a variety of topic presentations including the Public Health Authority. Planning meetings will continue in partnership with the Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center.



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