

2025-26 Respiratory Illness Season Patient Resource

If You Get Sick: Managing Flu, COVID-19 and RSV

*Information is current as of October 14, 2025

How can I tell if I have the flu, COVID-19 or RSV?

It is difficult to know the cause of respiratory symptoms without testing. No matter what the cause of your illness, most people should self-isolate and manage symptoms with simple things like rest, lots of fluids and over-the-counter medications.

If you think you might have the flu, antiviral medications are recommended if you are at higher risk of serious illness based on age or health conditions. Flu antivirals work best when they are started within two days of getting sick. If you are higher risk, don't delay in reaching out to your doctor about this medication.

If you think you might have COVID-19 and have a medical condition and/or are in a living situation or belong to a population that puts you at risk for developing severe illness, you may be eligible for antiviral treatment and should get tested right away. You need a positive test result (**rapid antigen or PCR test**) to access antivirals, which must be started within 5-7 days of your symptoms starting. Find more information on [testing and treatment](#) on the Ministry of Health website.

PCR testing is available to eligible individuals at some [assessment centres](#). Testing may also be available from your family doctor, community pharmacy and public health unit.

Stop the Spread

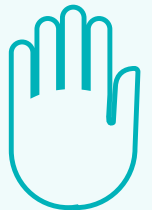
The flu, COVID-19 and RSV are all very contagious. You can spread these respiratory illnesses for up to 10 days after starting to feel sick. To prevent spread, stay at home until you have no fever and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if you are vomiting and/or experiencing diarrhea).

You should also take extra precautions for 10 days, including wearing a mask in public spaces and avoiding visiting friends and family who are at higher risk of serious illness.

Follow this advice for any respiratory illness, whether have tested positive or not.

Here is information to help you manage illness at home and understand when to seek medical attention:

[Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms](#) (OCCFP) and [Protection from respiratory illnesses](#) (Ontario Ministry of Health).



If you are struggling to care for yourself or a family member, don't hesitate to call your family doctor or seek medical attention. If you are asked to wear a mask when you come to visit the doctor, please do so to protect other patients and staff.

You can also visit [Health811 online](#) or call 811 to speak with a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

