

5 Ways to Protect Your Heart When Viruses are Going Around

Illnesses like COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) spread in similar ways and are common during the fall and winter. These **respiratory infections** can be especially dangerous for people with heart conditions.

Here are some tips to help you protect your heart and stay healthy.



1. Get your vaccines.

It's your best protection from serious illness. You need:

- A **flu shot** each season, ideally before the end of October
- **RSV vaccine** if you're ages 75+ or 50 to 74 with heart disease
- The latest **COVID vaccine** to fight the most recent strains of the virus



2. Steer clear of germs.

Fight germs by covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands frequently, avoiding contact with anyone you know is sick, and wearing a mask.



3. Keep up with your health visits and report symptoms.

If you have flu- or COVID-like symptoms, tell your doctor right away. There are medicines to help, but they need to be started early in your illness. Respiratory illnesses can make heart conditions worse, so speak up.



4. Take heart medicines as directed.

Let your care team know if you need help accessing or paying for your medications.



5. Boost your body's ability to fight infections.

Focus on being active, getting good nutrition, quality sleep, and lowering stress to strengthen your immune system.

For more tips on how to stay heart strong visit [CardioSmart.org/RespiratoryInfections](https://www.cardiosmart.org/RespiratoryInfections)

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