# How to Protect Yourself and Others from Respiratory Viruses

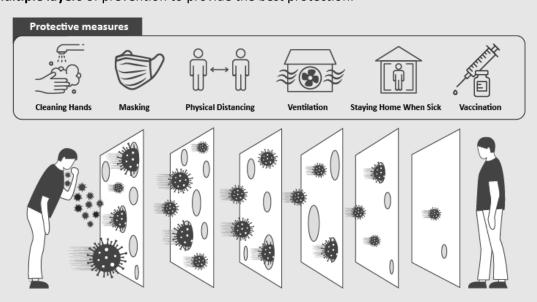
This fact sheet outlines prevention measures you can use to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses such as COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Vaccination is one of the strongest layers of prevention for COVID-19 and influenza. Combine it with other layers of prevention to lower your risk.

## Ways respiratory viruses are spread

- Respiratory viruses spread most commonly during close contact through an infected person's respiratory particles which are generated when a person breathes, coughs, sneezes or talks.
- Smaller respiratory particles, known as aerosols, can remain suspended in the air and transmit some viruses over long distances. The risk is higher in crowded indoor spaces with poor ventilation.
- Respiratory particles can also land on surfaces (e.g., furniture, surfaces). They can then contaminate your hands and transfer viruses to your eyes, nose and mouth.

## Layers of protection against respiratory viruses

Use multiple layers of prevention to provide the best protection.



Adapted from: Rockefeller Foundation. Layers of protection against covid-19 - the "Swiss cheese" model [video recording on the Internet]. New York: Rockefeller Foundation; 2021 [cited 2022 Mar 11]. 1:15 min. Available from: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou88lei-52k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou88lei-52k</a>

#### **Get vaccinated**

- Being vaccinated against COVID-19 and influenza helps to protect you from severe disease and hospitalization.
- Remember to get your seasonal influenza vaccine every year and ensure you are up-to-date with all COVID-19 boosters for which you are eligible.



# Stay home when sick

- Stay home when you are sick. For example, if you have a fever, new or increased cough, or are experiencing vomiting and or diarrhea.
- If you have to go out:
  - Practice physical distancing and avoid crowded spaces
  - Consider wearing a well-fitting mask in public.
- See Public Health Ontario's How to Self-Isolate fact sheet.



# Spend time outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor spaces

• Ensure your ventilation system is in good working order. If you don't have a ventilation system, open windows to increase fresh air flow if possible.



## Practice respiratory etiquette and keep things clean

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Wear a mask when ill with a respiratory infection.
- Clean high-touch surfaces regularly.



The information in this document is current as of September 2023.

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