**How to Protect Yourself and Your Children from Winter Respiratory Illnesses**

After all the shopping, planning, cooking, and traveling, nobody wants to spend the holidays in bed sick or even in the hospital fighting nasty viruses that continue to circle the globe.

Here's the important things you need to know to protect you, your children and all family members from winter respiratory illnesses.

**Winter Respiratory Illnesses**

As the seasons transition and colder weather sets in, it's natural to witness an uptick in respiratory viruses.

Common winter illnesses are:

* Flu
* RSV
* COVID-19
* Pneumonia

These viruses are a common occurrence, especially during this time of the year when people tend to spend more time indoors, are in closer proximity to each other, and have large holiday gatherings.

**Mitigating the risks**

These simple yet effective steps can help mitigate the spread of respiratory illnesses:

* Mask Up: Especially in crowded or indoor settings, or when you’re traveling.
* Hand Hygiene: Regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer.
* Make sure household surfaces are clean. Also, doorknobs, shopping carts, and car steering wheels
* Physical Distancing: Maintain a safe distance when possible.
* Improve airflow and ventilation: Bring in as much fresh air as possible by filtering the air, using a portable air cleaner, turning on exhaust fans, or opening windows when weather permits.
* Testing: Make sure you and members of your family are able to test, either using at-home or clinical laboratory tests, if you’re feeling sick. The sooner you know, the faster you can stop its spread and treat it.
* Vaccination: Ensure all eligible family members are up-to-date on recommended vaccines, including the flu shot and COVID-19 vaccines.

By making sure you take these precautions and staying information about the winter illnesses in your area, you can lower the chances of getting sick and look out for the well-being of your community during the colder months.

You can check what’s happening with respiratory illnesses near you by visiting the [CDC’s website](https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/index.html).