



**Press Release**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact**  
Venetta Seals | [rhcacares@rchd.care](mailto:rhcacares@rchd.care)  
432-447-3551 ext. 2243

## **Viral Respiratory Illnesses Increasing Across the Nation**

*Preventative measures, like vaccinations, may help reduce complications should you become infected.*

PECOS, Texas (Dec. 5, 2022) – Flu hospitalization rates have hit a 13-year high in the United States as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there have already been nearly 7,000 flu-related hospitalizations this season. While a flu outbreak in Reeves County has not yet occurred, local medical professionals urge eligible individuals to get vaccinated immediately.

“It is never too late to get your annual flu shot, and now is a perfect time,” says Louis McIntire, MD, Family Practice with OB provider at Reeves Regional Rural Health Clinic, a service of Reeves Regional Health in Pecos. “The sooner in the flu season that you get vaccinated, the more time your body has to build immunity before we reach the height of the flu season.”

According to the CDC, flu seasons in the last two years have been relatively calm thanks to isolation and face-covering practices because of COVID-19 precautions. With related measures now considerably relaxed to non-existent now, health professionals are again urging everyone eligible for a flu vaccine to get one as soon as possible.

Respiratory syncytial virus infection (RSV) has increasingly become a concern among many in the medical community as infection waves started earlier than usual.

While not a new virus, RSV has spread faster and broader than in previous years. Anyone can contract the virus, but babies, children under five, seniors, and immunocompromised individuals are especially vulnerable.

“Bottom line, if you are feeling ill, it is important to stay home, wear masks around others, and call your local medical clinic,” says Dr. McIntire. “Your medical provider can best advise of the next steps and additional precautions you should take based on symptoms.”

So how can you protect yourself and your loved ones during the fall and upcoming winter seasons? Dr. McIntire agrees with the CDC that everyone six months and older gets vaccinated.

**MORE**



## Viral Respiratory Illnesses Increasing Across the Nation

### Page 2

It is estimated that 51 percent of the U.S. population got a flu shot last year. This year, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases released a study that suggests that only 49 percent of U.S. adults plan to get their flu shot. The foundation reports that one in five at higher risk for influenza-related complications say they will not get vaccinated.

“Getting the flu shot each year is essential because prominent strains of the virus are constantly changing,” Dr. McIntire explains. “It is because of this that vaccinations are reviewed yearly and updated as appropriate to better match flu viruses expected to spread in the U.S. this season.”

Flu vaccines in the U.S. are quadrivalent, meaning they are designed to protect against the four flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to spread.

It is possible to have flu and other respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 or RSV simultaneously. Some of the symptoms are similar, making it hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone.

Symptoms of respiratory illnesses can be similar, which may include fever, chills, coughing, and muscle and body aches.

From a clinical standpoint, determining whether an individual is infected with the flu, COVID-19, RSV, or another virus can be hard to determine without lab work.

It is still possible for someone who has received a flu shot or COVID-19 vaccine to contract the virus, although symptoms in such cases are typically less severe than those who have not been vaccinated.

Vaccinations for RSV do not yet exist, but should an individual become ill; medication might be recommended to help ease symptoms.

Wearing face masks and physical distancing can help protect you and others from respiratory. The best way to reduce your risk of illness and its potentially serious complications is to get a flu vaccine each year for everyone six months and older.

If you have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine or a COVID-19 booster shot, the CDC recommends you do so as soon as possible. Both flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be safely administered at the same time.

Medicare and most private insurance plans cover the annual flu shot, and a self-pay option is available.

**MORE**

**Reeves Regional Health**

2323 Medical Drive. | Pecos, TX 79772 | 432-447-3551 | [www.reevesregional.com](http://www.reevesregional.com)



## **Viral Respiratory Illnesses Increasing Across the Nation**

**Page 3**

For more information about vaccines, please call Reeves Regional Rural Health Clinic at 432-447-0565.

### **About Reeves Regional Health**

Reeves Regional Health (RRH), formally known as Reeves County Hospital District, provides healthcare services for Reeves County and neighboring West Texas communities. Founded in 1954, RRH, a Level IV Trauma Center, offers various medical services, including emergency care, diagnostic imaging, physical therapy, general surgery, a clinical laboratory, and more. RRH also operates Reeves Regional Home Health & Hospice, Reeves Regional Rural Health Clinic. In November 2022, RRH began serving patients from a new \$115 million, 140,000-square-foot campus. For more information, please visit [www.reevesregional.com](http://www.reevesregional.com).

**###**

**Reeves Regional Health**

2323 Medical Drive. | Pecos, TX 79772 | 432-447-3551 | [www.reevesregional.com](http://www.reevesregional.com)