



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

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

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

PECOS, Texas (Jan. 22, 2024) – In a concerning turn of events, respiratory illnesses, particularly flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), are on the rise across the nation. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals a sharp increase in flu-related hospitalizations, reaching a 13-year high with nearly 7,000 cases reported this season. While a significant flu outbreak hasn't hit Reeves County yet, local medical professionals emphasize the importance of immediate vaccination for eligible individuals.

Louis McIntire, MD, Family Practice with OB provider at Reeves Regional Rural Health Clinic, urges the community, stating, "It is never too late to get your annual flu shot, and now is a perfect time. 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."

The past two flu seasons experienced relative calm due to COVID-19 precautions, but with these measures relaxed, health professionals stress the critical need for flu vaccinations. Moreover, the early onset of RSV infection waves poses an additional threat, spreading faster and affecting a broader demographic.

Dr. McIntire highlights the vulnerability of certain groups, stating, "Babies, children under five, seniors, and immunocompromised individuals are especially vulnerable to RSV. If feeling unwell, it is crucial to stay home, wear masks, and consult your local medical clinic for guidance on necessary precautions based on symptoms."

### **Urgent Vaccination Campaign**

To protect yourself and loved ones during the fall and upcoming winter seasons, Dr. McIntire aligns with the CDC's recommendation that everyone aged six months and older should get vaccinated.

However, recent studies indicate a decline in vaccination intent. Last year, 51% of the U.S. population received a flu shot, but this year, only 49% of U.S. adults plan to do so, according to the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. Alarmingly, one in five individuals at higher risk for influenza-related complications declares they will not get vaccinated.

Dr. McIntire underscores the importance of yearly vaccination adjustments, stating, "Prominent strains of the virus are constantly changing, requiring yearly reviews and updates to better match flu viruses expected to spread in the U.S. this season." Flu vaccines in the U.S. are quadrivalent, designed to protect against the four most likely flu viruses to spread.

**MORE**

**Reeves Regional Health**

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#### **Symptoms and Challenges**

Differentiating between flu, COVID-19, RSV, or other respiratory viruses based on symptoms alone is challenging. Symptoms such as fever, chills, coughing, and muscle aches can be similar across various respiratory illnesses.

Despite vaccination, there remains a possibility of contracting the virus, with symptoms typically less severe in vaccinated individuals. The RSV vaccination is recommended for adults ages 60 and older with certain health conditions, as well as expecting mothers who are 32-36 weeks pregnant.

#### **Preventive Measures and Recommendations**

Wearing face masks, practicing physical distancing, and getting vaccinated are crucial preventive measures. The CDC recommends immediate COVID-19 vaccination and booster shots if not already administered. Both flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be safely given simultaneously.

Medicare and most private insurance plans cover the annual flu shot, and a self-pay option is available. For more information about vaccines, please contact 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).

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