



**Rhode Island Department of Health**  
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[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

## **Memo**

To: Pre K-12 Schools and District Leaders

From: Center for COVID-19 Epidemiology, Rhode Island Department of Health

Date: January 17, 2024

Subject: Respiratory virus prevention

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During fall and winter, we often see increases in rates of respiratory viruses. Respiratory viruses include flu, COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and the common cold. Fortunately, many of the same prevention measures help reduce the spread of all these viruses and keep students in school. The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) encourages school leadership to review the key prevention recommendations below and share them with staff and families as appropriate.

- Get your flu shot. Everyone older than six months of age should be vaccinated against the flu every year. For information on where to get a flu shot, see [health.ri.gov/flu](http://health.ri.gov/flu).
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands regularly throughout the day using soap for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to clean your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work, and school.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Keep children home from daycare or school who have a fever, especially with a cough, congestion, runny nose, or sore throat, until they are fever-free for 24 hours without medications that reduce fever.
- If you have COVID-19, isolate for five days and wear a mask through day 10. [Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19 | CDC](#).
- Be up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations. For information on how to get vaccinated against COVID-19, see [C19vaccineRI.org](http://C19vaccineRI.org).

This Memo, similar to the August 24th Memo from RIDOH to school leadership, provides nonmandatory guidance for schools to follow during the 2023-2024 school year. There is no State-level masking requirement related to COVID-19 and schools. Schools and districts create their own COVID-19 prevention policies.

Please feel free to contact us for any questions or support at [RIDOH.COVID19Info@health.ri.gov](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Info@health.ri.gov).

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.