

"Triple endemic". I had never heard the word before a couple weeks ago. It references the three respiratory viruses, Covid 19, influenza (flu) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) that are all occurring at the same time. The flu and RSV are not new viruses and are generally present in the Winter months. While there is an annual vaccine against the flu there is no vaccine for RSV. All three of the viruses are extremely contagious and share some of the same symptoms to include cough, runny nose, and fever. All three of them can affect all ages and RSV can be especially serious for infants with small airways and elderly adults.

When Covid 19 was first identified and found to be extremely contagious and lethal, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) identified best practices to decrease the spread. Schools were closed, the use of masks were strongly encouraged, and travel and all socialization was discouraged. Good handwashing was promoted along with the use of alcohol disinfectants. While cases of Covid 19 continued to be reported, the CDC noticed a decrease in the number of flu and RSV cases being reported* This was attributed to the fact that the precautions taken to decrease Covid 19 also worked to decrease the incidence of the flu and RSV.

With the advent of the Covid 19 vaccines and boosters many of the Covid restrictions were removed. Kids have been back in school, people are once again traveling and socializing and the use of masks for the general public is no longer mandated except in certain environments. While Covid 19 cases continue to be diagnosed, they are less severe than prior to the vaccines. What health experts are now concerned with is the increase in flu and RSV cases being reported. Cases are showing up in higher numbers and much earlier than usual. RSV is affecting children especially hard resulting in a higher incidence of inpatient admissions.

While it is important to take care of ourselves, it is equally important to take care of each other. When fewer people get sick, everyone's risk goes down. We can decrease the risk of infections by continuing to do the following:

- Stay home when we are sick.
- If we don't feel well and must go out, wear a mask.
- Cover our cough and sneezes.
- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Use alcohol hand sanitizer.
- Get the flu vaccine early and annually.
- Get the Covid vaccine and available boosters.

I wish you all good health. Be smart and stay informed. Knowledge is power!

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