

Top health tips infectious diseases physicians want you to know

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The COVID-19 pandemic thrust infectious diseases physicians into the spotlight to share their invaluable insights. While the federally declared COVID-19 public health emergency has ended, these medical experts remain on the front lines of combating infectious diseases beyond COVID-19 including influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus, to name a few. Whether such diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi or parasites, infectious diseases, physicians offer practical advice to safeguard patients' health and protect their loved ones.

Here is a list drawn from the AMA's What Doctors Want Patients to Know™ series—which provides physicians with a platform to share what they want patients to understand about today's health care headlines—on some important health tips that infectious diseases physicians want patients to know.

1 Reinfection with SARS-CoV-2 can happen

At this point in the pandemic, many people in the U.S. have had COVID-19—whether they know it or not. And a growing number of people are getting reinfected with SARS-CoV-2. As SARS-CoV-2 continues to evolve, physicians are urging patients not to let their guards down.

2 COVID-19 oral antivirals aid in treatment

While there is an ongoing need for people to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccination, two antiviral oral treatments are available. Learn about who is eligible and how these treatments work.

3 RSV remains a concern

In 2021, as influenza cases picked up and experts weighed concerns about a possible surge in COVID-19 cases, children's hospitals were already filling up with another viral threat: [respiratory syncytial virus](#) (RSV). The drastic and unusually early spike in the respiratory infection contributed to long waits for treatment and worries about a "tripledeemic" of a surge in [flu, COVID-19 and RSV cases](#). But new vaccines and treatments are available this year to protect older adults and infants during RSV season.

4 Know what to expect with the flu

In the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, precautions such as masking, physical distancing and staying home resulted in drastically lower influenza activity in 2020 and 2021. In 2022, the flu came back with the highest hospitalization rates in children and older adults. For 2023, there is still a risk of multiple respiratory viruses circulating this Fall and Winter, which may make it hard to know which virus is causing your influenza-like symptoms. An infectious diseases physician sets out to clear things up to navigate the flu season.

5 Keep up to date with vaccinations

Immunizations, or vaccinations, have prevented countless cases of disease and disability, and they save millions of lives each year. Yet there are still people who are sickened or disabled by preventable infectious diseases and families that mourn the devastating loss of loved ones from vaccine-preventable illnesses. That is why it is important to stay up to date on immunizations for the entire family.

6 Protect yourself from Lyme disease

There is an ongoing threat of ticks in certain areas when enjoying time in nature. They can even be found in your backyard and transmit Lyme disease, a tickborne infection caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Usually, Lyme disease completely resolves with a short course of antibiotics. But Lyme disease is not always a simple illness—it can cause prolonged symptoms if left untreated and sometimes even despite effective treatment, a phenomenon which is not well understood. Two infectious diseases physicians discuss what patients need to know about Lyme disease.

7 Take steps to prevent STIs

While sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are preventable, there are more than 20 million new cases in the U.S. each year, with rates continuing to soar. And while many patients may think they learned all they need to know about STIs in sex ed, that's not the case. There's much more to know.

Visit the [AMA COVID-19 resource center for physicians](https://patients.ama-assn.org/public-health/prevention-wellness/top-health-tips-infectious-diseases-physicians-want-you-know) for clinical information, guides and resources, and updates on advocacy and medical ethics.