

It's germ season. But getting flu and COVID boosters for babies may take patience.

[Meredith Cohn](#)

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Babies typically need to get vaccines from their doctors, but not all have COVID doses yet. (Juanmonino/Getty Images)

Health officials say it's a waiting game for parents who have kids under 3.

Many babies will be getting their first COVID-19 vaccines this fall, but some parents are finding that scheduling the shots isn't so easy.

Maryland pharmacists can only vaccinate children age 3 and older for COVID and flu. Pediatricians normally give the smallest family members their shots, but not all have their COVID doses yet.

"The COVID vaccine was delayed because FDA approval didn't come till the end of August, so it's a waiting game," said Nichole Jantzi, assistant director of clinical education for Johns Hopkins Community Physicians, which has several doctors' offices in the region.

This could muck up what public health officials had been hoping would become an annual trip to get flu and COVID vaccines ahead of colder months when the viruses flourish. Their message to the already booster-weary public now is to have some patience, but please don't give up.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommend](#) everyone age 6 months and older get both vaccines.

The flu kills thousands every year and sends many more to their beds for a week feeling awful. And while severe cases of COVID are way down, infections can still be deadly, particularly for older people and those with underlying health conditions. There are about 200 people hospitalized now after a [late-summer wave](#) in the state, and the amount of virus found in wastewater remains high.

It's especially important for everyone to get both updated shots if there is a baby under 6 months old in the house who can't get vaccinated, to "cocoon them with protection," said Dr. Rebecca Carter, division head of general pediatrics at University of Maryland Children's Hospital and an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Ditto if you plan to visit grandma, who is at higher risk.

Kids that have never been vaccinated for COVID or didn't finish an initial series will need two or three shots over time, depending on the vaccine type. Most kids feel just fine after two shots, but some can feel soreness where they were jabbed, so move the limb around and apply warm compresses or take ibuprofen, Carter suggests. Some people also get flu-like symptoms as the body builds immunity, though this is not actually flu.

The University of Maryland community doctors and others are still waiting for their COVID deliveries for patients under age 12, who get smaller doses. They have them for older patients, as well as flu doses.

The Hopkins offices have received their COVID doses for kids, as well as flu vaccine and an RSV antibody treatment also recommended to help babies stave off the worst complications from the viruses.

Those with children 18 months or older can go to an urgent care center, such as a MinuteClinic, located inside some CVS pharmacies.

Amy Thibault, spokeswoman for CVS Pharmacy, recommended scheduling appointments to ensure availability at a specific MinuteClinic. CVS pharmacies without a MinuteClinic will schedule appointments for those at least age 5, and Walgreens will vaccinate children at least age 3 at certain locations.

Most insurance plans cover the shots without a copay.

Local health departments expect to have flu and COVID vaccine clinics for all ages, though most are focusing on uninsured and underinsured residents. Often they won't turn away a parent who can't find a vaccine elsewhere.

Howard County's health department said most of the pediatricians contacted by health officials said they planned to provide the vaccines to children, including those under age 3, so parents just may need to check availability.

"They had not yet received their doses," Lisa DeHernandez, a health department spokeswoman, said this week, "and that is certainly frustrating for parents and pediatricians alike."

She couldn't say when each office would get supplies, or when the health department would get its allotment for all ages.

Flu vaccine was widely available, she said. The department planned community vaccination events over the next several weeks for all family members, including babies.

For more health department and pharmacy locations and contact information, go to [vaccine.gov](https://www.vaccine.gov).

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