

## **Atrium Health Navicent Physicians Offer Tips for Limiting Spread of Respiratory Viruses this Holiday Season**

*It's important to take precautions to limit spread of flu, RSV and COVID-19 at holiday gatherings*

**MACON, Ga., Dec. 1, 2022** – The holiday season brings many opportunities to gather with friends and family, but with respiratory viruses such as the flu, RSV and COVID-19 present in our community, it's important to take steps to prevent the spread of disease.

“Although the number of COVID-19 cases in our community is much lower than last year, our community is seeing an influx of flu and RSV cases. If you haven't yet received a flu vaccine, and completed a COVID-19 vaccine series supplemented with boosters, don't delay. Vaccines are proven to offer protection against severe disease,” said Atrium Health Navicent Chief Medical Officer Dr. Patrice Walker. “It's also important to continue to practice good hand hygiene and stay home when sick to prevent infecting others.”

Although symptoms of flu, RSV and COVID-19 are similar, there's no vaccine for RSV. The Respiratory Syncytial Virus, more commonly known as RSV, is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Babies and older adults are at highest risk for more severe infections, some of which may require hospitalization.

“This year we are seeing an uptick in individuals affected by flu and RSV, in part, because COVID-19 precautions such as masking and social distancing also protected the community from other respiratory viruses, resulting in lesser community immunity from these illnesses,” Walker said.

Atrium Health Navicent physicians offer the following tips to protect you and your family this holiday season:

1. **Get vaccinated against the flu. Also get vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19.** This winter, doctors believe that both the flu virus and the COVID-19 virus will be spreading at the same time, and that it is possible to contract the flu and COVID-19 at the same time. Vaccines help protect against severe disease and hospitalization. You can receive both a flu and a COVID-19 vaccination at the same time.
2. **Plan gatherings around the highest-risk member of your family.** This means taking more precautions — such as mask-wearing and limiting the invite list — if someone in your family is elderly or immunocompromised. Infants also are at higher risk if infected with RSV or flu.
3. **Pay attention to your symptoms.** In the days before your gathering, if you start to experience flu or COVID-19-like symptoms — sore throat, congestion, coughing, fatigue, headaches and muscle pain — do not attend gatherings or events. Stay home instead, even if a rapid test is negative.
4. **Mask up while you travel.** Even though masks are no longer mandated in airports and for most public transportation, it may be a good idea to wear a mask to prevent exposure to not only COVID-19, but flu and other viruses. It's also a great idea to wipe down high-touch surfaces, like tray tables and seatbelts, when boarding an airplane.
5. **Keep it clean.** Wipe down frequently touched surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, toilets, faucets and sinks. Provide hand sanitizer for your guests. If you are attending a gathering, bring hand sanitizer with you. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating or preparing food, before touching your face, after being in a public place, after using the restroom, and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.

### **About Atrium Health Navicent**

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of healthcare in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home — including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness

for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit [www.NavicentHealth.org](http://www.NavicentHealth.org).

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