***Providers can copy and paste this template letter into their own letterhead and send to patients.***

[Name]

[Address]

[City], [State] [Zip]

[Date]

Re: Respiratory Viruses and Where to Get Care

Dear [Name],

Respiratory illness season started early and severe in the United States this year. In Washington, flu activity started early and is increasing. COVID-19 is circulating. And we are seeing high rates of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), which causes cold-like symptoms that often get better on their own but can become serious for infants and the elderly. All of these respiratory illnesses are placing severe strain on our emergency departments and hospitals.

Our best protection against respiratory illness is prevention. **Washington State Department of Health strongly recommends everyone 6 months or older get a flu shot each year and get up to date on COVID-19 boosters.** Flu and COVID-19 vaccine are widely available in Washington. Most places that offer COVID-19 vaccine also offer flu vaccine, and you can get both at the same time. Find your vaccine at [vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov](https://vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov).

You and your family can lower your risk of illness:

* Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water. If soap and water aren’t available, use hand sanitizer.
* Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose.
* Stay home when you’re sick—even if it’s “just a cold.” Isolate sick household members in separate rooms.
* Wear a mask in crowded or poorly ventilated settings.
* Limit the number of close contacts for infants and people with certain chronic conditions.
* Frequently clean high-touch surfaces with a cleaner that kills common viruses.

If you or your child get sick and need medical care, it’s important to choose the right level of care.

* Call a nurse advice line, if your medical plan has one.
* Call your healthcare provider and ask where you should go.
* Check if telehealth (virtual medical visit) is available through your medical plan.
* Consider urgent care when you need a higher level of care—like if you are dehydrated, have difficulty breathing, have poor color or significantly decreased activity and alertness.
* In a true emergency, go to your nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1.

Find more about caring for children with respiratory virus infections from the American Academy of Pediatrics at [healthychildren.org](https://healthychildren.org).

Sincerely,

[Physician or Practice]