



10 tips to reduce holiday stress

When stress gets the best of us, we may turn to less healthy means of coping. Here are some ways to make the season more fun.

[Learn more](#)

News you can use – Wellness



Struggling with dry skin?

What can you do to combat "winter skin?" Our dermatologists have some tips about moisturizers, handwashing, sunscreen, hot showers and more.

[Winter skin care tips >](#)[Don't forget sunscreen in the snow >](#)[Health Library: Skin cancer >](#)

Winter blues or SAD?

It's time for the shortest days of the year. Some of us may experience winter blues, and others may have seasonal affective disorder. What's the difference?

[Self-care to get ahead of symptoms >](#)[How getting outside improves health >](#)[More mental health posts >](#)

Avoid ski and snowboard injuries

On average, between two and four skiers per 1,000 are injured each day on the slopes in the U.S. Rates are similar for snowboarding.

[Tips and exercises for the slopes >](#)[Improve stretching and flexibility >](#)[Sports Medicine Learning Center >](#)

Spotlight – Research and innovation



Biologists are seeking the ideal Christmas tree scent

Down the road, the team also plans to investigate whether trees could be "upcycled" to the perfume industry after the holiday season winds down.

[Read about the research](#)

How sneaky salmonella tricks our defenses

The new insights could potentially explain gut changes during disorders like Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, and lead to better treatments for gut infections.

[Read about the research](#)

Updates – COVID-19

COVID data

COVID wastewater levels rise to 'Low'

California's overall adjusted [wastewater COVID viral activity level](#) rose from "Minimal" to "Low" or 1.90 as of the week ending Dec. 7, the CDC's latest report as of press time.

For comparison, last year at this time the level was 6.26, or "High." At the peak of this summer's wave in early August, the level was 13 or "Very High."

If you're traveling, [this CDC page](#) has tools for searching the current wastewater viral activity level for individual states. You can often see data for individual reporting sites at the county level as well.

Hospitalizations remain very low

California's preliminary [weekly hospitalization rates](#) of COVID-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population were 0.9 as of the week ending Dec. 7, the CDC's latest report as of press time. For comparison, levels were approximately:

- 1.1 in late November (reported in the last edition of this newsletter)
- 6.8 in early August during the summer wave
- 9 around New Year's during the winter peak

National snapshot and outlook

"As of December 13, the amount of acute respiratory illness causing people to seek health care is moderate nationally," the CDC wrote in its last national [Respiratory Virus Data Channel Weekly Snapshot](#) as of press time. "COVID-19 activity is beginning to increase from low levels in some areas of the nation. Seasonal influenza activity continues to increase across the country. RSV activity is moderate and continues to increase in most areas of the United States, particularly in young children."

"There is still time to benefit from getting your recommended immunizations to reduce your risk of illness this season, especially severe illness and hospitalization."

[The same CDC page](#) also has tools for searching the current wastewater viral activity level for COVID, flu and RSV for individual states. For example, for California wastewater viral activity levels for flu were reported as "high," and levels of RSV "moderate."

More data sources

[Federal, state](#) and [county](#) sites may continue to report various COVID data. Some data may be in transition, less relevant than before, and/or involve longer lag times.

Updated COVID vaccines available for patients

UC Davis Health has received updated 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccines and is offering limited self-scheduling for UC Davis Health patients.

Patients may contact their primary care provider's office to schedule an appointment, or self-schedule through [MyUCDavisHealth](#). (Note: not all UC Davis Health clinics offer the vaccines).

[According to the CDC](#), everyone ages 6 months and older should get the 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccine. This includes people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine before and people who have had COVID-19. For more info, see [the CDC's COVID pages](#) or our [COVID pages](#).

Some other info sources about availability and scheduling are: consumer pharmacies/drug stores, the state [covid19.ca.gov website](#) and [MyTurn website](#), and the CDC's [Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine page](#).

Free COVID tests return

The federal government has announced that U.S. households are eligible to order 4 free COVID-19 tests at [COVIDTests.gov](#).

The state [covid19.ca.gov website](#) also has information about groups that qualify for free tests, and about insurance coverage for tests.

Symptoms? Keep at-home COVID treatment in mind

Prescription antiviral pills like Paxlovid can be an easy-to-use COVID treatment for people with conditions that increase risk of severe disease – such as diabetes, extra weight, and high blood pressure. [Info: COVID treatments page](#)