Government Will Offer Free COVID Tests Again This Fall

Each household will be able to order four at-home tests starting in late September.

August 29, 2024 By Liz Highleyman

COVID-19 is still here, and unlike the flu, seasonal waves continue to occur in both the summer and winter. This year's summer wave appears to be on the wane, but in anticipation of the coming winter wave, the federal government will again offer free at-home nasal swab tests by mail.

COVID cases reached a relatively high level this summer, though rates of hospitalization and death remain far below those of the early years of the pandemic.

"[W]hile the virus continues to mutate and change—and change faster than the flu virus—our underlying immunity from prior vaccines and prior infections provides some protection," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director Mandy Cohen, MD, MPH, said at a recent media briefing. "But we know that protection decreases over time, and that certain groups will be at higher risk."

Starting in late September, each U.S. household will be able to order four tests via the www.covidtests.gov website. The tests will be mailed directly to the home at no charge. These tests are able to detect the current SARS-CoV-2 viral variants. Free tests will also be available at community sites such as libraries and food banks.

The CDC recommends that people experiencing respiratory symptoms—whether due to COVID, the flu, a cold or respiratory syncytial virus—should stay home, avoid contact with others and wear a mask for five days. Precautions are especially important when around elderly or immunocompromised people. Those who test positive for COVID may be eligible for treatment with Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir).

Earlier this month, the Food and Drug Administration authorized updated mRNA COVID vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer that are designed to target the current circulating variants. Approval of an updated Novavax vaccine is pending.

Vaccines can prevent severe illness and reduce the risk of developing long COVID. The CDC recommends that everyone ages six months and older receive an updated 2024-2025 vaccine. Antibodies start to wane a few months after vaccination, so some experts suggest waiting until the

fall in order to have maximize protection during the winter wave, but other note that by then, variants may have changed again. Visit the CDC's COVID-19 vaccine webpage for the latest updates.

The federal government no longer offers free vaccines for everyone but will fund state and local health agencies to provide vaccines for people who are uninsured or underinsured. Medicaid, Medicare and private insurers will also cover the new vaccines.

Click here to order free COVID tests.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/government-will-offer-free-covid-tests-fall