



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

Volume 11, Issue 7

The Healthy Journey

handls.nih.gov
877-677-9538

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH • NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

HANDLS COVID study

HANDLS has taken precautions to ensure the safety of all participants during COVID-19. HANDLS will begin contacting participants again to schedule MRV appointments.

Q: What tests will be completed during the MRV visit?

A: For now, the MRV visit will be split into 2 brief parts.

The first part is on the telephone. It will involve Informed Consent and a short COVID-19 questionnaire. Staff will explain the details on the phone. If you agree, staff will ask you a few survey questions about COVID-19. At the end of your phone call, we will make an in-person MRV appointment.

The second part is an in-person MRV visit at which you will receive COVID-19 viral and antibody testing. Staff will test you for COVID-19 by collecting cells from the back of your throat. We will also test your blood for antibodies for COVID-19. This blood test lets us know if you have antibodies because you were exposed to the virus.

Q: Who will be contacted for an MRV visit?

A: There are over 3,000 participants in the HANDLS study. Staff will begin contacting the last 500 participants who completed a Wave 5 visit. After this group of participants has been contacted, staff will begin contacting all other participants to return to the MRVs.

Q: How long will the tests take?

A: Our new HANDLS visit is designed to be much shorter than usual. Please set aside about 1 hour for the phone call and 1 hour for the MRV visit. HANDLS will offer transportation if you need a ride to the MRVs. In this case, please allow extra time for transportation.

Q: How much will I be compensated?

A: This is a 2-part study. If you complete both the telephone and in-person tests, you will receive \$140 at the end of your

in-person MRV visit. This payment will be loaded onto an ATM debit card. You must complete both the telephone and in-person tests to receive compensation.

Q: Do I need to take any action right now?

A: Please keep an eye on your mailbox. HANDLS staff will send a letter to your home address. This letter will outline the purpose of the study. It will explain how you will be contacted to participate. You may call the phone number in your letter to make an appointment. HANDLS staff will also call you directly to set up an appointment. Please set aside about 1 hour for this telephone call. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

COVID-19 Reminders

COVID-19 is a highly contagious respiratory illness. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions have higher risks for COVID-19 complications. You may protect yourself and your community by:

- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people
- Avoid gatherings of more than a few people
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Isolate yourself from others if you have symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and frequently used areas
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Wear a protective mask that covers your nose and your mouth

Contents

HANDLS COVID study.....	1
COVID-19 Reminders	1
Protect Yourself from the Flu	2
Recommended Vaccinations for Adults	2
Get Out to Vote in November!.....	3
Get counted	3

Protect Yourself from the Flu

The flu is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. The flu spreads easily from person to person. People who catch the flu have symptoms like cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, body aches, and fatigue. As people grow older, their immune systems can weaken. This means it is easier for older adults to catch the flu. Flu season lasts from late Fall through Winter. You can prevent the flu by getting a flu shot, washing your hands often, and by staying away from sick people.



Flu Season and COVID-19

Getting a flu shot is more important than ever in 2020. Flu season and COVID-19 are overlapping this year. COVID-19 and the flu have similar symptoms, even though they are caused by different viruses. This makes it harder for people to know what is wrong when they feel sick. Experts warn that the two viruses could lead to COVID-19 testing shortages and an increase in hospitalizations. Older adults are at a higher risk for both COVID-19 and the flu.

While a COVID-19 vaccine is not available yet, the flu vaccine is available every year. The flu shot prevents costly medical office visits and hospitalizations. Getting a flu shot also protects the people around you from getting sick, especially babies, young children, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases, or older adults. The flu shot does not cause the flu. The shot causes antibodies to develop that teach your body how to fight the flu virus.

Where Can I Get a Flu Shot?

There are many resources for people who want a flu shot. Stores such as Giant, Safeway, Target, and CVS provide flu shot clinics. You can contact the store or pharmacist directly for an immunization schedule. You can also contact your primary care physician to receive a flu shot in the medical office. Veterans who are enrolled with the VA Maryland Health Care System can visit a VA walk-in clinic for a free flu shot. Please visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/> for a list of flu shot locations in your zip code. If you do not have health insurance, please call 311 for updated Flu Shot Clinic information.

Recommended Vaccinations for Adults

Each year, many adults become very ill from preventable diseases. Vaccines are one way to prevent infection and disease. There are many vaccines available, and it is important to talk to your doctor to see which ones you need. Adults need vaccinations to prevent some of the conditions listed below:

- **Seasonal Influenza (flu):** This virus is prevented by getting a flu shot. It is important to get a flu shot every year.
- **Pertussis (whooping cough):** This infection is prevented by the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine. Adults should get the Tdap vaccine once if they did not receive it as an adolescent. You only need one dose of the Tdap, unless you are pregnant. It is recommended that women get a Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy.
- **Tetanus and diphtheria:** These infections are prevented by the Td vaccine. This vaccine, or booster shot, is recommended every 10 years.
- **Shingles:** This disease is prevented by the herpes zoster vaccine. This vaccine is recommended for adults 50 years and older. You need 2 doses of this vaccine. You can get your second dose 2-6 months after you get the first dose. This vaccine should last for several years, but your doctor may recommend a booster shot if it has been some time since you last received this vaccination.
- **Pneumococcal disease:** This disease causes infections such as pneumonia and meningitis. The pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccination (PPSV23) is recommended for adults 65 years and older. This vaccine has 2 shots. If you are over 65, you only need this vaccination once, unless otherwise noted by your medical provider.
- **Hepatitis A & B:** These liver infections can be prevented with hepatitis A & B vaccinations. The hepatitis A vaccine has 2 doses. You should get your second dose at least 6 months after the first dose. The hepatitis B vaccine has 2-3 doses, depending on the brand.



How Do I Know if I Need a Vaccination?

If you do not remember which vaccinations you have gotten, there are ways to find out. First, check with your doctor's office and any previous doctors' offices. They have your medical records. You can also check with your employer or previous employers. Sometimes they have vaccination records on file for employees. If you can't find your records, doctors may have blood tests to determine if you need to get some vaccines again.

Get Out to Vote in November!

This November, you can vote for the next President of the United States. The General Election will be held on November 3, 2020.



How Do I Register to Vote?

There are 4 ways that you can register to vote in Maryland. The deadline for voter registration in Maryland is October 13, 2020.

Register online: The following link will allow you to register to vote or request a mail-in ballot: <https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/OnlineVoterRegistration/InstructionsStep1>

Register by mail: Download the Voter Registration Application Form from <https://boe.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Application%20for%20Voter%20Registration-2016-7-27.pdf>. Sign the form and mail it to: State Board of Elections, P.O. Box 6486, Annapolis, MD 21401-0486.

Register in person. You can register at the following locations: Local election offices, Maryland State Board of Elections, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Social Services, Motor Vehicle Administration, Offices on Aging, MTA Paratransit Certification Office, Public higher education institutions, Military recruitment offices, and Marriage license offices.

Get counted

You should have received an invitation letter through the mail in April 2020. This invitation included a unique ID to protect your personal information. With this ID you can complete the census online. You can also call the phone number in the letter.

Some household may receive a paper questionnaire in their Census invitation letter. The questionnaire comes

Register during the early voting period: In 2013, the Maryland State Legislature approved a bill that authorized same-day registration during the early voting period. Early voting for the general election is October 26, 2020 through November 2, 2020. You can register at the polling station and vote at the same time. Voters must provide proof of residency (e.g., utility bill, pay stub with your current address) and identity (e.g., driver's license) to register.

When Can I Vote?

General Election Early Voting: October 26, 2020 – November 2, 2020

General Election Day: November 3, 2020

Voting Safety and COVID-19

Many people are concerned about visiting the polls during COVID-19. Voting centers will keep voters six feet apart. Centers will limit the number of people inside vote centers at one time. Please expect lines and wait times on General Election Day.

To avoid lines at the polls and exposure to others, you may request a mail-in ballot. It is important to note that the United States Postal Service is experiencing delivery delays. If you have a mail-in ballot, you can take it to a drop box in your area to ensure your vote is counted in time. Visit this link to view drop box locations throughout Maryland:

https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/20_PP_Vote%20Centers_and_Drop%20off%20Locations.pdf.

You may wish to vote in-person during the early voting period when there are fewer voters waiting in line. A list of early voting centers will be posted at https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/index.html#vote_in_person when locations are finalized.

with a postage-paid return envelope so that you can send it in for free.

The deadline to participate in the Census is 9/30/2020. If you did not receive an invitation letter, you can still complete the Census without a unique ID by following the instructions listed here: https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2020-01/Responding_Without_Census_ID_FAQ.pdf.

*HANDLS
National Institute on Aging
Biomedical Research Center
251 Bayview Blvd
Baltimore MD 21224-2816*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH • NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.