

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 5, 2026

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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- Basic precautions, like getting immunizations, washing hands, and staying home when sick, can reduce the spread and help keep people safe
- Influenza activity in the state has moved to “Very High,” the most severe of five categories of respiratory illness spread
- First pediatric death from flu this season reported in Illinois

IDPH Urges Flu Shots, Other Preventive Measures as Influenza Rates Climb Statewide

Influenza climbs to “Very High” levels in state; COVID-19 also on the rise

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is urging residents to take precautions against the spread of influenza (flu) and other seasonal respiratory illnesses, as rates continue to climb across the state. Flu activity in the state has climbed to “Very High” in recent days, the most severe of five categories of respiratory illness activity, as defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, COVID-19 rates have climbed to “Moderate” levels in Illinois. These trends are similar to what is being seen across the nation.

Illinois is also reporting its first influenza death in a child this season. [Nationally](#), there have been nine pediatric deaths due to influenza this season. During the 2024/2025 season, Illinois reported 12 pediatric deaths from influenza, 6 from RSV and 3 from COVID.

Data on seasonal respiratory illnesses across the state is available at IDPH’s [Seasonal Respiratory Illness Dashboard](#), which is updated weekly.

“Illinois is facing a significant winter surge in seasonal respiratory illnesses with flu activity at very high levels,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “Vaccinations remain the most effective tool to prevent severe illness from flu, COVID-19, and RSV. Simple steps like covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands regularly, staying home when sick if you are able, and improving ventilation are also critical to preventing further spread. If you develop symptoms, it is important to get evaluated and treated early in your illness, especially if you are 65 years or older, are a young child under the age of 2 years, are pregnant, have chronic conditions, or care for someone at risk. IDPH is monitoring the situation closely and working with our partners in public health and healthcare to protect Illinois families across the state.”

According to IDPH’s [Illinois Vaccination Coverage Dashboards](#), 21.9% of Illinoisans have received their flu shot this season, while only 6.8% have received COVID-19 immunization. Speak to your provider, pharmacist, or local health department for information on how you can obtain vaccines for yourself and loved ones. You can also find out more about vaccine availability in your area via the state’s [vaccine locator dashboard](#).

While anyone can potentially become seriously ill from seasonal respiratory illnesses, the most susceptible are the very young, very old, pregnant individuals, and those who are immunocompromised or have other underlying health conditions.

IDPH recommends the following steps to reduce your risk of contracting or spreading seasonal respiratory illness:

- Get immunized. With flu season usually peaking between December and February, and lasting until May, it's not too late to get your flu shot and other immunizations, such as for COVID-19 and RSV (for those who are eligible). For more information on respiratory illness vaccines, view IDPH's [immunization guidelines](#).
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water - it is one of the most effective ways to reduce spread of illness. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home when you are ill, if able, and wear a mask if not.
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Wearing a mask when ill will further help prevent viral spread. An N95 or comparable mask offers the best protection.
- Minimize close contact with sick people.
- Antiviral treatments can minimize symptoms and speed up recovery when started quickly after symptoms emerge. Antiviral treatments for flu are most effective when given within 48 hours of starting to feel ill. For COVID-19, treatment must be started within 5 to 7 days after symptoms appear. Older adults, young children and those who are pregnant or have [certain underlying conditions](#) are at risk for complications and should contact a healthcare provider to be assessed for the need for treatment as soon as possible.

You can learn more about infectious respiratory illnesses and best practices to prevent their spread on the IDPH website at [Infectious Respiratory Disease](#).

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