



FAMILIES

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WEEKLY FLU NEWS

March 23, 2020

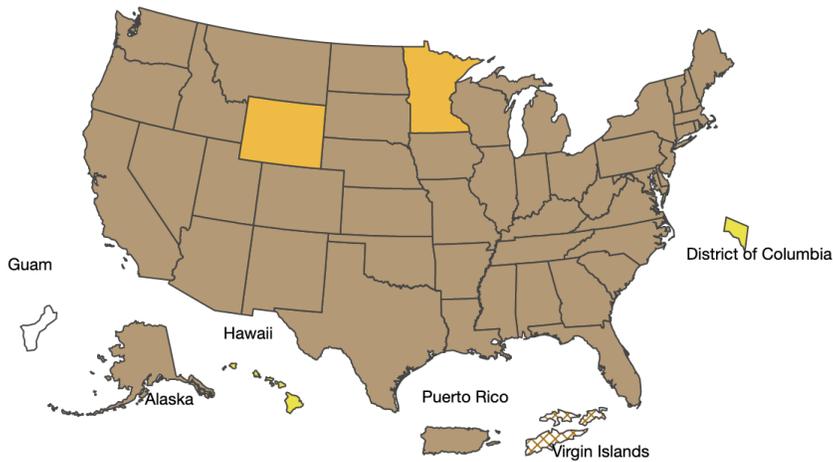


CDC: Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report: Week 11, Ending Mar. 14, 2020

March 20, 2020; [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

- Laboratory confirmed flu activity as reported by clinical laboratories continued to decrease; however, influenza-like illness activity increased.
- 15.3% of specimens from clinical laboratories tested positive for influenza.
- Nationally, influenza A (H1N1) viruses are most common at this time. Previously, influenza B/Victoria viruses predominated nationally.
- 5.8% of visits to a health care provider were for influenza-like illness. All 10 regions remain above their baselines.
- The overall hospitalization rate is 65.1 per 100,000, which is similar to past seasons at this time.
- 7.1% of deaths were attributed to pneumonia and influenza, which is below the epidemic threshold.
- Five new pediatric flu deaths were reported for the 2019-2020 season during week 11. The total for the season is 149.

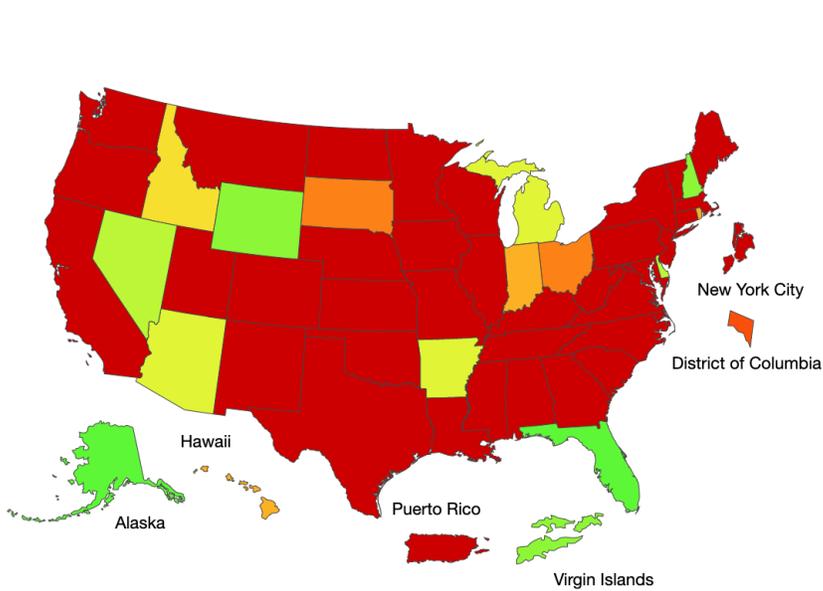
Week Ending Mar 14, 2020 - Week 11



Influenza Activity Estimates

- No Activity
- Sporadic
- Local Activity
- Regional
- Widespread
- No Report

2019-20 Influenza Season Week 11 ending Mar 14, 2020



ILI Activity Level

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Minimal
- Insufficient Data



2019-2020 U.S. Flu Season: Preliminary Burden Estimates

March 20, 2020; CDC

CDC estimates that, from October 1, 2019, through March 14, 2020, there have been:

- 38 - 54 million flu illnesses
- 17 - 25 million flu medical visits
- 390,000 - 710,000 flu hospitalizations
- 23,000 - 59,000 flu deaths



Coronavirus has spared American children. The flu has killed 149 kids so far this season.

Mar. 16, 2020; [CBS News](#)

While the flu continues to take a deadly toll on U.S. children, evidence shows that kids do not appear to be at higher risk for the novel coronavirus than adults, the CDC said, and adults make up most of the known cases to date.

CBS News medical contributor Dr. Tara Narula said one reason that child deaths are high is because earlier in the season the predominant strain was influenza B, which tends to affect children more adversely. However, influenza A viruses "are now the most commonly reported."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that so far, evidence shows even if children contract the novel coronavirus, they do not seem to get very sick. but kids could still be spreading the disease."If a young individual, a child, gets infected, they may do perfectly well from a physical standpoint," he said, "but they may bring it home to a person who is susceptible."



How the 1957 Flu Pandemic Was Stopped Early in Its Path

Mar. 18, 2020; [History](#)

On April 17, 1957, Maurice Hilleman realized a pandemic was on its way to the United States. When the new flu strain hit the United States in September, just as Hilleman had predicted it would, the country was ready with a vaccine.

The virus, dubbed the "Asian flu," killed an estimated 70,000 Americans and one to four million people worldwide, but experts suggest it would have killed many more if not for the vaccine.

Making a vaccine for a new flu strain is very different from making a vaccine for something completely new like COVID-19, the novel coronavirus that emerged in 2019. Doctors and scientists first developed viable flu vaccines in the 1940s, so they were not starting from scratch when they went to work on the 1957 flu vaccine.



Flu drug used in Japan shows promise in treating COVID-19

Mar. 18, 2020; [Live Science](#)

A drug used in Japan to treat influenza seems to be effective at treating the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, according to news reports.

The antiviral drug, called Favipiravir or Avigan, showed positive outcomes in clinical trials involving 340 individuals in Wuhan and Shenzhen.

Patients in Shenzhen who had tested positive for COVID-19 and who were given the drug got a negative virus test back an average of four days later. That was compared with a

negative test about 11 days later, as a median, for patients not on the drug, according to news reports. In that same trial, lung conditions (as shown in X-rays) improved in about 91% of patients taking Favipiravir, compared with just 62% who weren't taking the antiviral drug.



Millions of New Zealanders could miss out on flu vaccinations during COVID-19 pandemic

Mar. 18, 2020; [NewsHub](#)

Hundreds of thousands of additional flu vaccinations are being rolled out in New Zealand as healthcare workers brace for flu season to hit in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But despite the increased vaccines, so much more demand is now anticipated that the vaccines are being prioritized for vulnerable groups. A total of 400,000 additional vaccines are being rolled out for free to the over-65s, pregnant women, those with chronic conditions and children with respiratory illnesses.



How The Novel Coronavirus And The Flu Are Alike ... And Different

Mar. 20, 2020; [NPR](#)

The fact that the novel coronavirus appeared in the middle of flu season has prompted inevitable comparisons. Is COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, pretty much similar to the flu or does it pose a far greater threat?

Although there are still many unknowns about COVID-19, there is some solid information from researchers that sheds light on some of the similarities and differences at this time.

Symptoms:

Fever, dry cough, fatigue, and shortness of breath. These are the most frequent symptoms of COVID-19. They also overlap with symptoms of seasonal flu.

Transmission:

Flu and coronavirus are both thought to be spread primarily through close contact with droplets expelled from the nose and mouth of a sick person. The CDC recommends keeping a physical distance of about six feet away from others, which can help slow the spread of both viruses.

Data from China shows that each coronavirus case seems to infect around 2 to 2.5 additional people. That's higher than flu. The average patient spreads the flu virus to about 1.3 others.

Length of hospitalization:

Once a patient with a serious case of coronavirus is hospitalized, the average stay is 11 days, according to a study based on January data from Wuhan — about twice as long as the 5-to-6 day average stay for flu.



Record High Flu Hospitalization Rates for Young Kids, Young Adults

Mar. 19, 2020; [Medscape](#)

COVID-19 may be the dominant public health concern at present, but the flu is still a dire threat. Influenza-related hospitalization rates are the highest on record for children younger than 5 years and adults aged 18 to 49 years, according to the latest report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

These rates exceed even those seen during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. Hospitalization rates for children aged 5 to 17 years "are higher than any recent regular season but remain lower than rates experienced by this age group during the pandemic," the CDC explains.



'It's just the flu' remark undermines how seriously influenza should be taken

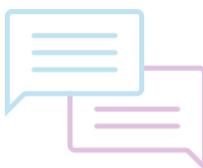
Mar. 22, 2020; [NNY360](#)

As the coronavirus pandemic began to take hold, a common refrain and misconception was that it resembles the seasonal flu. But the coronavirus is more deadly and experts say a vaccine could be more than a year away. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has said the coronavirus is 10 times more deadly than seasonal influenza.

However, the "regular" flu is nothing to take lightly, something that is stressed by the nonprofit organization Families Fighting Flu. The organization includes families whose loved ones have suffered serious medical complications or died from influenza.

"We certainly don't want to belittle the public health burden of influenza, but it is a little bit scary to think that coronavirus could even result in a larger burden," Ms. Marotta said. "We don't want people to panic. We want people to be smart and to continue practicing healthy habits and listening to public health officials and medical experts."

"The same precaution methods and measures apply," Ms. Marotta said. "We hoped that people would have been doing these things throughout flu season anyway. That includes washing your hands, coughing or sneezing into your elbow, disinfecting and avoiding close contact with others given your particular circumstances. These are smart, everyday practices we should have already been doing during flu season. The good news is that we can continue to do these things for coronavirus."



Join our new Facebook group: Flu Fighting Forum

Want to learn more about flu? Join our new group that is focused solely on flu education and advocacy: [Flu Fighting Forum](#). This group, run by Families Fighting Flu, is a place for conversations about flu prevention, burden, and activity while offering opportunities for flu education and advocacy.



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