

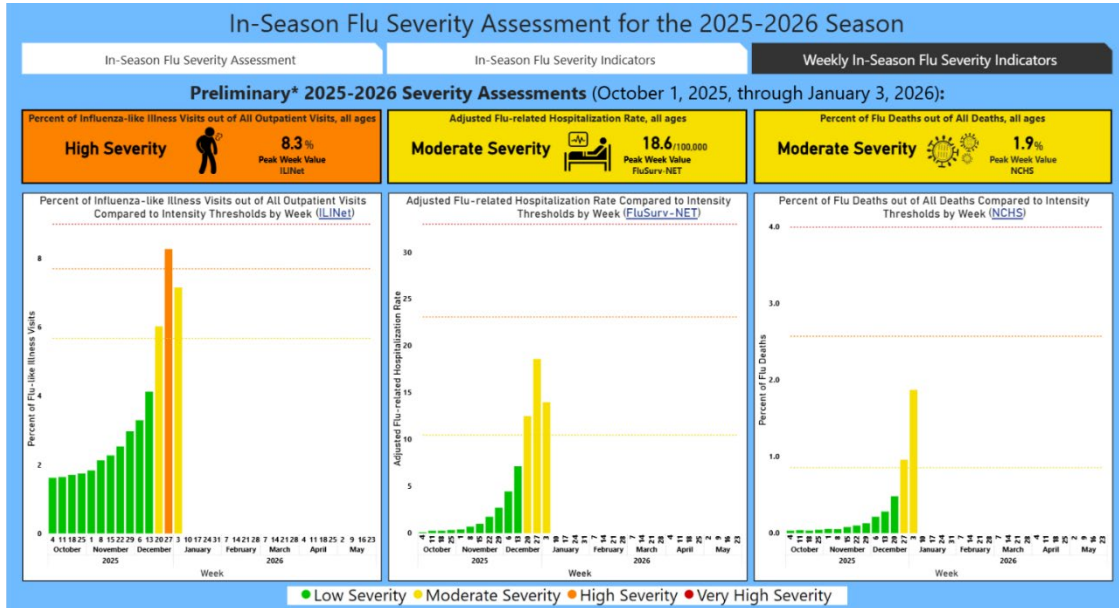
Report to the Boards of Health

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Mid-Michigan District Health Department, Wednesday, January 28, 2026
 Central Michigan District Health Department, Wednesday, January 28, 2026
 District Health Department 10, Friday, January 30, 2026

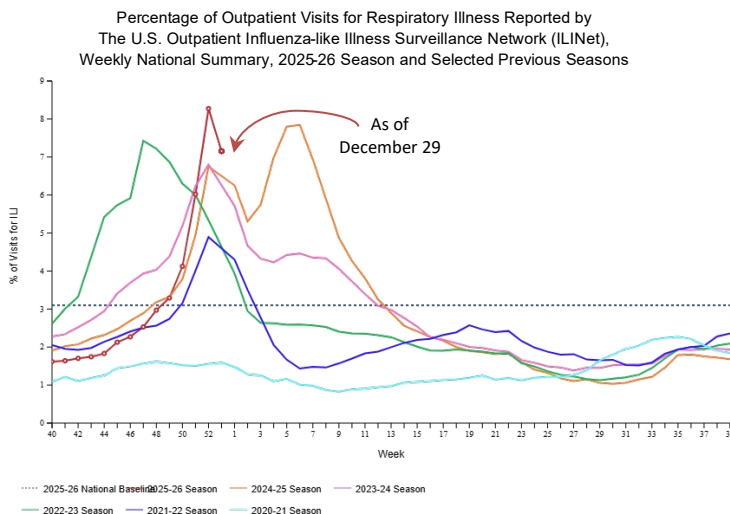


Influenza

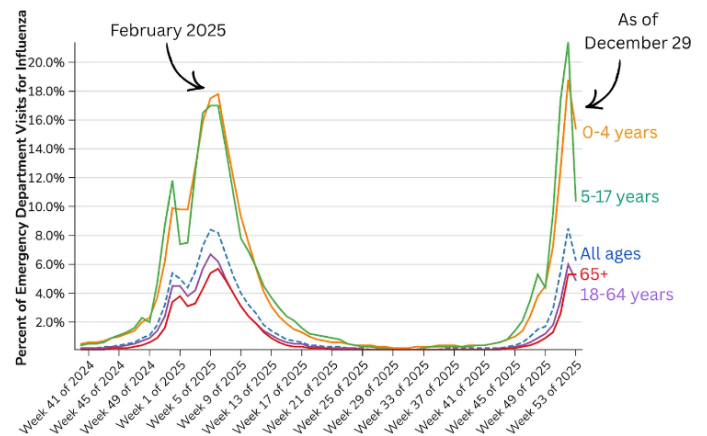


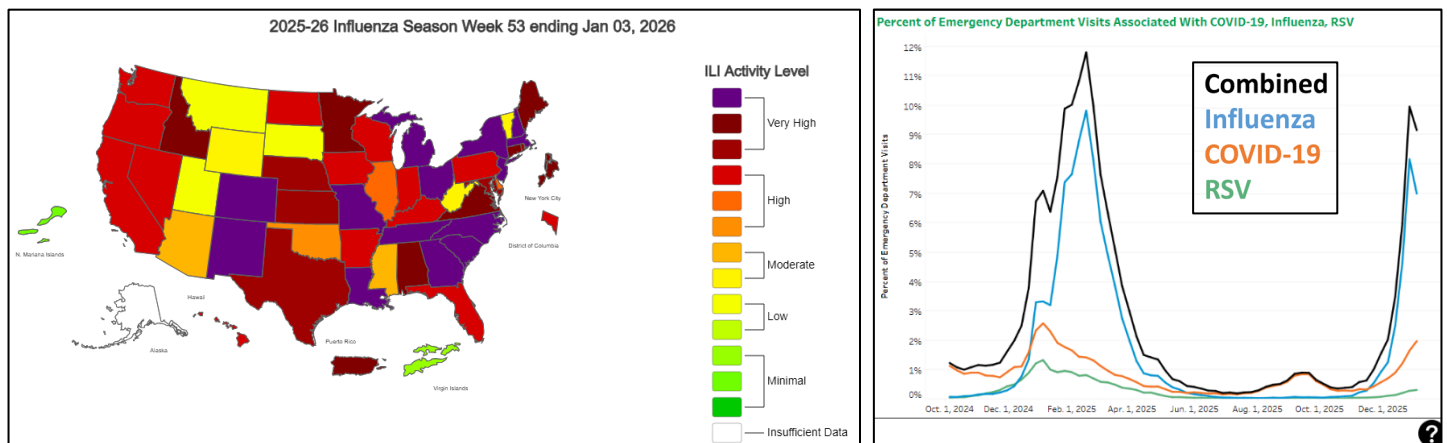
Influenza-like illness (ILI), or doctor visits for fever, cough, and sore throats, are tracked to keep an eye on respiratory illness activity. Right now, it is flu season and the main cause for ILI is influenza. ILI activity is currently the highest it has been in the US since the CDC started tracking it in 1997. Some indicators seem to be decreasing but that may be due to the holidays (less people seeking healthcare, delayed reporting, etc.).

Emergency department visits for influenza have also been very high, and are highest among kids ages 5-17, with children under 5 a near second. So far this year in the US, seventeen children have died from the flu. Last year a record high number of children died, with a total of 280 reported pediatric flu deaths.



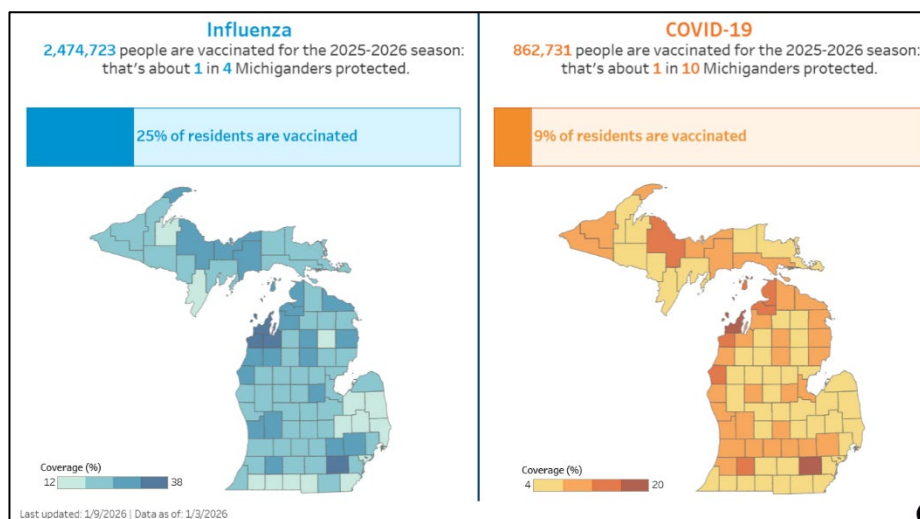
Emergency Department Visits for Influenza by Age Group





So far most of the influenza has been caused by influenza A, specifically influenza A (H3N2). Of the samples that have had full genetic characterization, over 90% have been subclade K - a new mutation that started in the Southern Hemisphere during their flu season last summer. Mutations are common for the flu virus, but these changes were more substantial than usual and unfortunately happened *after* the flu vaccine formula was made.

Because the current vaccine still trains the immune system to recognize parts of the virus that haven't changed, it should still provide some protection against severe illness and against two other types of influenza A, which are both starting to circulate. Preliminary data from the U.K. show that flu vaccination reduces hospitalization by 70–75% in kids and 30–40% in older adults.



Recommendations:

- The flu vaccine is still the most effective prevention against getting the flu and getting severely ill with the flu. If you've not yet been vaccinated, consider doing so as soon as possible. It is available at your health department, most pharmacies, and doctor's offices.
- If you do get sick, [prescription antivirals](#) can reduce illness [severity, hospitalization, and even death](#)—especially for high-risk groups. Call your healthcare provider or local pharmacy to see if you qualify.
- Other preventative measures still help practicing good hand and cough hygiene, wearing a mask in crowded indoor spaces, improving ventilation when possible, and staying home if you're sick.

Sources

- CDC. 2025-2026 United States Flu Season: Preliminary In-Season Severity Assessment. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/php/surveillance/in-season-severity.html#cdc_generic_section_1-in-season-severity-assessment
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- Kirsebom, F. C., Thompson, C., Talts, T., Kele, B., Whitaker, H. J., Andrews, N., ... & Bernal, J. L. (2025). Early influenza virus characterisation and vaccine effectiveness in England in autumn 2025, a period dominated by influenza A (H3N2) subclade K. *Eurosurveillance*, 30(46), 2500854.