

Flu levels starting to fall, CDC says

February 9 2013, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



While activity remains high, it has decreased in most areas.

(HealthDay)—The flu seems to be easing its grip on the United States, federal health officials reported Friday.

While [influenza activity](#) remained elevated, it decreased in most areas of the country during the week ending Feb. 2, the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reported.

According to the CDC:

- Nineteen states experienced high levels of [flu](#) activity (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and

Wyoming).

- Twelve states experienced moderate activity (Alabama, California, Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, West Virginia and Wisconsin).
- Thirteen states experienced low activity (Alaska, Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee and Washington).
- And six states experienced minimal activity (Florida, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire and South Carolina).

The flu continued to hit older people hard, with more than 50 percent of hospitalizations involving adults 65 years and older.

Fifty-nine children have died from the flu this season, with 14 deaths reported last week, the CDC said.

There's no system to report adult deaths from flu, but the agency said the number of deaths remains higher than the threshold used to declare a [flu epidemic](#).

The predominant strain of circulating flu this season continues to be influenza A H3N2, which typically poses bigger problems for young children and the elderly, according to the CDC. But, predominant strains can vary across states and regions of the country, the agency noted.

The 59 [pediatric deaths](#) so far compare to 153 deaths reported during the 2003-04 season, which was another H3N2 season, the agency said.

An estimated 36,000 people die from the flu and its complications in a typical season, according to the CDC. From 1976 to 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States ranged from a low of about

3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.

Flu season usually peaks in late January or early February.

The best defense against the flu remains the flu vaccine and it's not too late to get vaccinated, the CDC said. The agency recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get vaccinated.

This year's vaccine appears to be well matched for the circulating flu strains, the CDC said. A recent report put the vaccine's effectiveness at 62 percent. No vaccine is 100 percent effective. But if flu strikes, vaccination often results in milder illness, the agency said.

Two antiviral medications, Tamiflu and Relenza, can reduce flu symptoms and the course of the disease. To be effective, however, they must be started within 48 hours after symptoms appear.

Flu symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, head and body aches, and runny nose. People at particular risk for flu and its complications are pregnant women, those 65 and older and anyone with a chronic illness. The CDC urges these people to get the flu vaccine, which is available as an injection or nasal spray and in a stronger dose for seniors.

More information: For more on flu, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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