

Flu still widespread but easing in some states, CDC says

February 4 2013, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



45 children have died from flu this season; seniors also especially vulnerable.

(HealthDay)—Continuing a trend that emerged late last month, flu activity remains high across the United States but there are reports that the number of infections may be leveling off in some regions of the country, federal health officials reported Friday.

For the week ending Jan. 26, the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reported that:

- Twenty-four [states](#) and New York City were reporting high levels of [flu](#) activity (Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota,

Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming).

- Thirteen states and the District of Columbia were reporting moderate [flu activity](#) (Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia).
- Four states were experiencing low activity (Kentucky, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin), and nine states were experiencing minimal activity (Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee).

The [flu season](#), which got an early start in November in southeastern states, appeared to be easing somewhat in the South, Southeast, New England and the Midwest regions of the country. But infections were rising in the West.

Hospitalizations and deaths—key indicators of a flu season's severity—increased again during the week ending Jan. 26. People 65 and older and young children are being hit especially hard this flu season.

Forty-five children have died from the flu this season, with eight 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 45 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.

People can visit this [U.S. government website](#) to see where vaccine is available in their area.

As of Jan. 25, 134.2 million doses of flu vaccine had been distributed to vaccine providers in the United States for the 2012-2013 [season](#).

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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Citation: Flu still widespread but easing in some states, CDC says (2013, February 4) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

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