

Flu infections continue to decline

March 9 2013, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



33 states experienced minimal activity last week, CDC says.

(HealthDay)—The flu season may not be over, but the worst of it seems to be.

Flu activity, although still elevated, declined in most parts of the United States during the week ending March 2, U.S. health officials reported Friday.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#):

- Four states experienced moderate flu activity: Illinois, Michigan, Vermont and Virginia.
- Thirteen states experienced low flu activity: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas and Utah. New York City also

experienced low activity.

- Thirty-three states experienced minimal activity: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

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

Eighty-seven children have died from the flu this season, with six deaths reported last week, the CDC said.

There is 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, with more B strains appearing last week.

The 87 [pediatric deaths](#) so far compare to 153 deaths reported during the 2003-04 season, which was another H3N2 season, the agency noted.

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, the CDC said. The agency recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get vaccinated.

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 include 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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