

# Feeling sick? Bad flu season gets worse as a 'second peak' looms.

Cases across the country had appeared to decline before new public health data showed upticks in infections.



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Which flu strain is driving the second peak?



How many total illnesses/hospitalizations this season?



How many pediatric flu deaths in past week?



What specific action did Muffet McGraw call for regarding Trump?



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The United States isn't out of a severe flu season yet as more [children are getting infected](#).

Cases across the country had appeared to decline [before the latest U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data](#) on Jan. 30 showed upticks in infections.

“We are heading up a second peak of flu season,” said Caitlin Rivers, a Johns Hopkins University epidemiologist who writes the [“Force of Infection” newsletter](#).

The country saw its first peak right around the New Year, followed by a couple weeks of declines, she added.

“Now, unfortunately, we’re seeing increases again, particularly in school-age children,” Rivers said. And as children and teens become infected, flu then spreads in households, causing upticks in cases.

Flu season is typically in the fall and winter, though could last longer. Experts note it can be notoriously hard to predict how a flu season will unfold.

So far, the CDC estimated there have been at least 20 million illnesses, 270,000 hospitalizations and 11,000 people have died from flu so far this season. Children under 18 years old had the highest peak weekly hospitalization rate since the 2010-2011 season, CDC said.

**Flu season is underway.** [What are common symptoms to watch for?](#)

"We're not out of the flu winter yet," said Dr. William Schaffner, professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, in Nashville.

In the latest CDC data for the week ending Jan. 24, there were eight more children who died from flu, bringing the total number of [childhood flu deaths](#) this season to 52. Approximately 90% of deaths in children who were eligible for the vaccine and had known vaccine status did not receive their flu shot.

The United States' [dominant influenza A\(H3N2\) strain](#) had mutations with a subclade K to make it highly transmissible, sparking a relatively severe flu season. Flu vaccines provided some protection, particularly against severe infections, Schaffner said.

But the other influenza B strain has been smoldering, Schaffner said. Influenza B tends to be more prominent at the end of flu season. Latest CDC data showed slight increases in influenza B nationally.

The Sun Belt tends to see a lag in flu cases, creating more infections later, said Dr. George Rust, a professor at Florida State University College of Medicine.

As cases appear to be ticking back upward, Schaffner said vaccination is key. Rust said it's not too late to get vaccinated, but it's getting close.

Beyond flu shots, people should avoid people who are coughing and sneezing, which is how flu spreads. They can also practice regular handwashing with soap and water.

"If you're sick, don't be a hero," Rust said, adding people should avoid going to school or work if they're sick, with other symptoms such as fever, body aches and fatigue. "Don't spread your germs."

People at higher risk of hospitalization include people ages 65 and older; people with underlying medical conditions; immunocompromised people; and those who are pregnant.

Well-fitted face masks, such as N95 or KN95 respirators, can reduce risk of spread, especially in crowded settings.

Much of the same prevention principles apply to other circulating winter respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19 and RSV.