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## WEEKLY FLU NEWS

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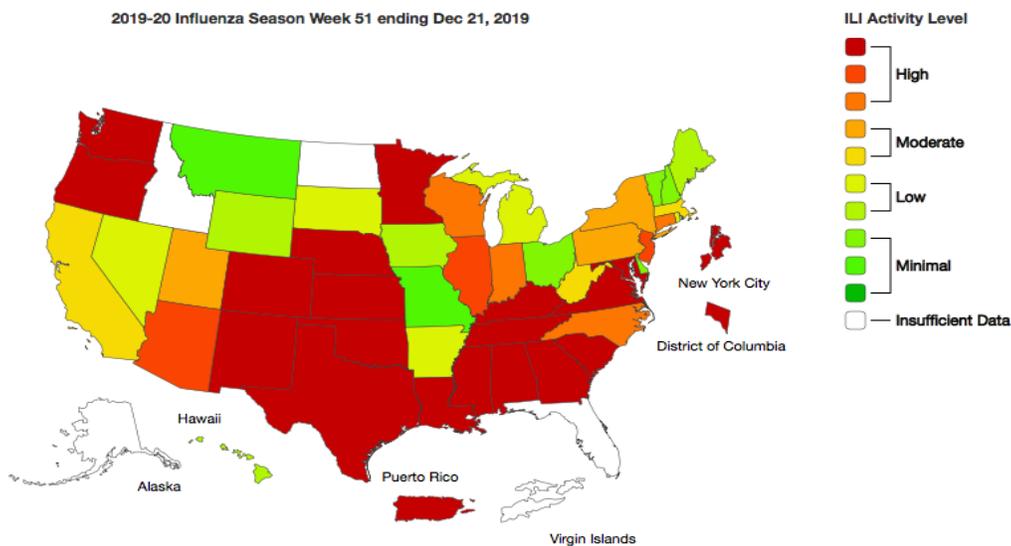
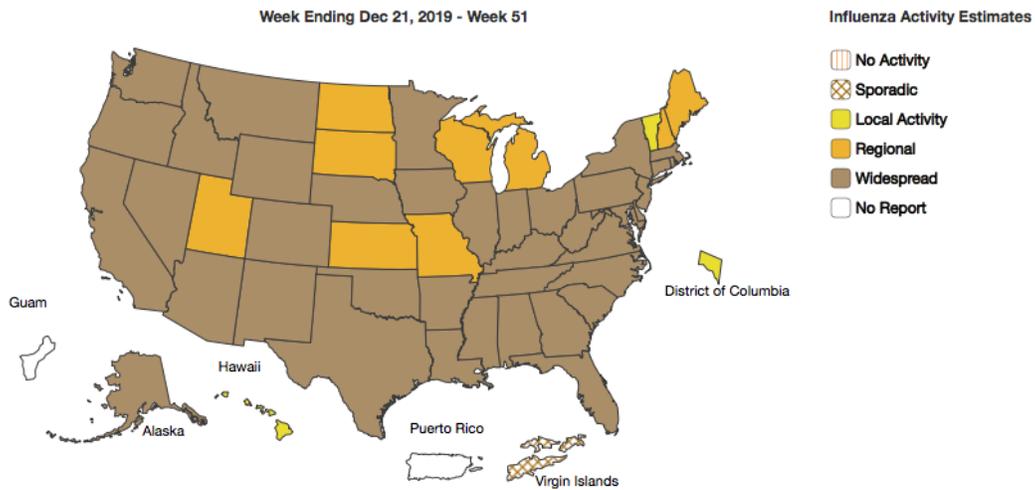
**December 30, 2019**



**CDC: Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report: Week 51, Ending Dec. 21, 2019**

**Dec. 27, 2019; [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)**

- Seasonal flu activity in the United States continues to increase and has been elevated for seven weeks.
- 22.1% of specimens from clinical laboratories tested positive for influenza.
- Nationally, influenza B/Victoria viruses are most common followed by H1N1. Predominant viruses vary by region and age group.
- 5.1% of visits to a health care provider were for influenza-like illness, which is above the national baseline of 2.4%. All 10 regions were at or above their baselines.
- The overall hospitalization rate is 6.6 per 100,000, which is similar to past seasons at this time.
- 5.7% of deaths were attributed to pneumonia and influenza, which is below the epidemic threshold.
- Three new pediatric flu deaths were reported for the 2019-2020 season during week 51. The total for the season is 22.



## 2019-2020 U.S. Flu Season: Preliminary Burden Estimates

Dec. 27, 2019, [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

CDC estimates that, from October 1, 2019, through December 21, 2019, there have been:

- 4.6 million - 6.6 million flu illnesses
- 2.2 - 3.2 million flu medical visits
- 39,000 - 68,000 flu hospitalizations
- 2,100 - 5,200 flu deaths



## **Tune in to Voices for Vaccines podcast featuring FFF President, Shelle Allen**

**Dec. 11, 2019; [Voices for Vaccines](#)**

Shelle Allen's healthy, happy daughter, Madi, was 12 years old when she asked to be picked up from a birthday party. After a day, she figured Madi had "just the flu." She never imagined that what would follow would be a months-long battle with influenza for Madi's life. In the end, everything about their lives changed.

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## **Here's why you really need a flu shot**

**Dec. 20, 2019; [NPR](#)**

Thanksgiving leftovers are a distant memory, and December's extra travel, shopping and family commitments are already straining nerves, budgets and immune systems. It's officially "the holidays" — which also means we're well into a new flu season.

It's never too late to benefit from a flu shot, even into December and January, says Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt School of Medicine in Nashville.

"Giving influenza vaccine to people with heart disease, for example, is as important as giving them a statin," Schaffner says, yet many people living with chronic illness — and even many of their health care providers — don't realize how vital flu vaccination is to managing their condition.

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## **Losing daughter turns mom into flu shot crusader**

**Dec. 23, 2019; [Sanford Health](#)**

It's easy to think of your young child's flu shot as just another thing on the "parenting safety" checklist. It might fall somewhere between making sure they buckle up every time they get in the car, and making sure their hot dog gets cut up so they don't choke.

It's also easy to think of the flu shot as kind of optional: convenient if your child already has a doctor's appointment. But otherwise, something you hope to get around to sometime this winter. And if you don't, well, you'll try to be more on top of it next year.

After all, it seems like you always know someone each year who gets the flu — the respiratory virus, not the "stomach bug." Yes, they complain they were really exhausted and couldn't do anything for a week or so. But whenever you do hear of a flu death, isn't it usually a senior, or someone who had other health issues?

Actually, no. Anyone, at any age, in any state of health, can die from influenza.

To realize how serious, and personal, the flu can get takes only one short conversation with a mom whose healthy, spunky 2-year-old daughter died less than 48 hours after

coming down with her first flu symptoms.



## **When schools say, 'the flu shot is not required,' parents hear, 'it's not necessary.' Nothing is further from the truth**

**Dec. 23, 2019; [CNN](#)**

The concerning scenario has played out in my office over and over again this season. "Your child is due for the flu vaccine today" is interrupted by, "Oh, no, doctor -- we don't like to put unnecessary things in their body."

The argument comes from parents who vaccinated their children against the flu at ages 1, 2, 3 and 4; parents of children who tolerated the vaccine well, who did not contract the flu, and yet at age 5 the flu shot suddenly became "unnecessary." I'm even hearing it from parents of siblings. For the child under age 5, parents agree to the flu shot; for the child over age 5, they decline it.

So, what changes at this magical age of 5? Schools in New York City, where I practice, stop requiring the flu shot. "Not required" has translated into "not necessary."



## **Why your first battle with flu matters most**

**Dec. 19, 2019; [University of Arizona](#)**

How successfully a person can fend off the flu depends not only on the virus' notorious ability to change with the season, but also on the strain first encountered during childhood, according to new research published in the open-access journal PLoS Pathogens.

The findings offer an explanation for why some patients fare much worse than others when infected with the same strain of the flu virus. The results also could help inform strategies aimed at curbing the impact from the seasonal flu.

"The last two flu seasons have been more severe than expected," says study co-author Michael Worobey, head of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and a member of the BIO5 Institute at the University of Arizona. "In the 2017-18 season, 80,000 people died in the U.S., more than in the swine flu pandemic of 2009. Influenza is a major, major killer – not just in this country, but worldwide."



## **Why you won't get the flu and a cold at the same time**

**Dec. 24, 2019; [Healthline](#)**

You can be hung over from the holiday party and also have a cold.

You can be jet-lagged from flying home and also come down with the flu, or influenza.

But you likely won't have both a cold and the flu at the same time.

That's the finding from a new study that examined thousands of records of illnesses.

Its conclusion was that there is strong evidence the viruses that cause colds and influenza interact — and interfere with each other — in the human body.

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## Improving flu vaccine uptake: Is texting the answer?

Dec. 18, 2019; [Medscape](#)

The day before Rosie Baxter turned 4 years old, she sat in the garden of her home in Sydney, Australia, having a tea party with her twin sister Ellie. Both little girls had been inside with the flu for several days, and mom Kerry-Anne thought it was time for a bit of fresh air. Rosie made an effort to join in the party and smile, but her eyes started to close. "I was watching her," said Kerry-Anne, "and I knew something wasn't right."

At the local emergency department, the physician sprinted back to Kerry-Anne with the X-ray: Rosie's lungs were completely consolidated. Despite oxygen and supportive measures, the medical team began losing the battle.

"They told us to say goodbye," said Kerry-Anne. "We held her while they gave her something and intubated her."

Rosie did live, but only just. A sputum culture identified the virus: she was battling H1N1/09 influenza.

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