



# FAMILIES

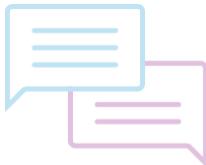
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## FIGHTING FLU, INC.<sup>®</sup>

### WEEKLY FLU NEWS

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**March 2, 2020**



#### **Join our new Facebook group: Flu Fighting Forum**

Want to learn more about flu? Join our new group that is focused solely on flu education and advocacy: [Flu Fighting Forum](#). This group, run by Families Fighting Flu, is a place for conversations about flu prevention, burden, and activity while offering opportunities for flu education and advocacy.

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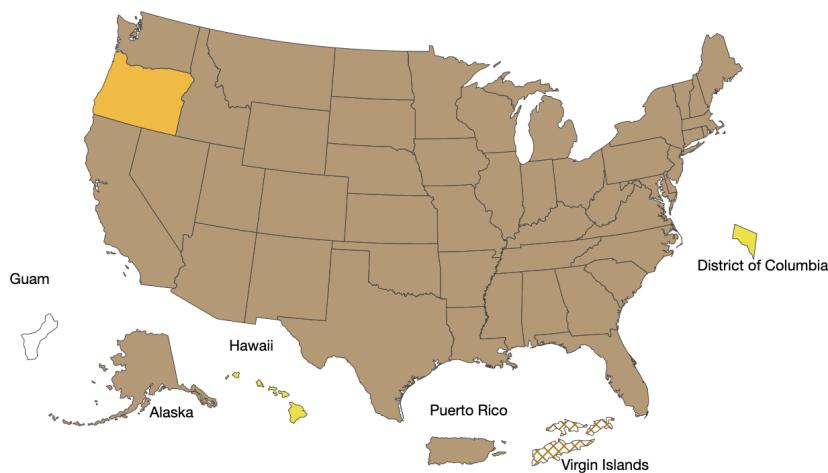
#### **CDC: Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report: Week 8, Ending Feb. 22, 2020**

**Feb. 28, 2020; [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)**

- Key indicators that track flu activity remain high but decreased slightly this week. Indicators that track overall severity (hospitalizations and deaths) are not high at this point in the season, although rates differ by age group.
- 26.4% of specimens from clinical laboratories tested positive for influenza.
- Nationally, influenza B/Victoria viruses and H1N1 viruses are most common this season. There have been continued increases in H1N1 viruses in recent weeks. Predominant viruses vary by region and age group.
- 5.5% of visits to a health care provider were for influenza-like illness. All 10 regions remain above their baselines.
- The overall hospitalization rate is 52.7 per 100,000, which is similar to past seasons at this time.
- 6.9% of deaths were attributed to pneumonia and influenza, which is below the epidemic threshold.
- Twenty new pediatric flu deaths were reported for the 2019-2020 season during week 8. The total for the season is 125.

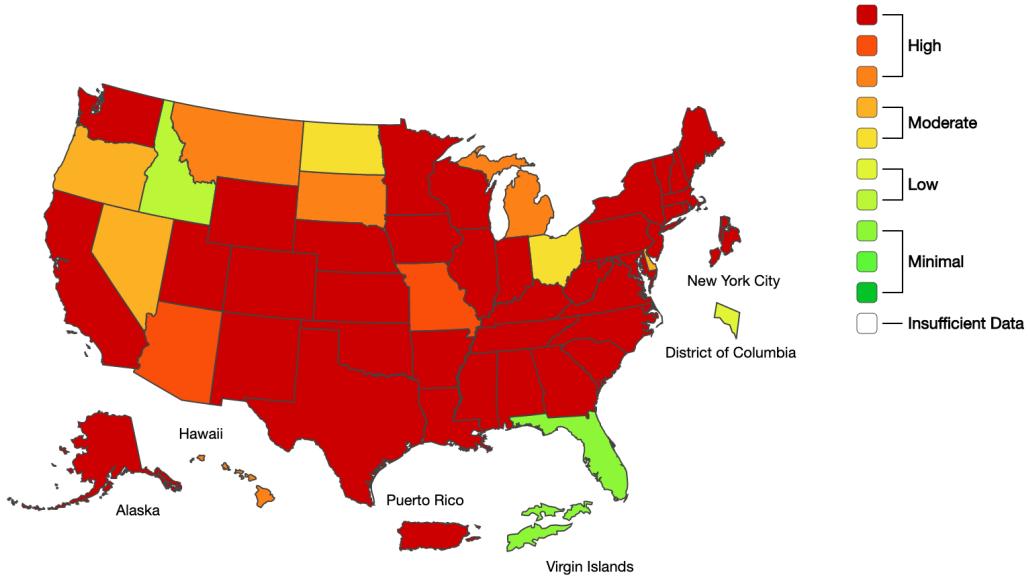
Week Ending Feb 22, 2020 - Week 8

#### Influenza Activity Estimates



2019-20 Influenza Season Week 8 ending Feb 22, 2020

#### ILI Activity Level



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

Feb. 28, 2020; CDC

CDC estimates that, from October 1, 2019, through February 22, 2020, there have been:

- 32 - 45 million flu illnesses
- 14 - 21 million flu medical visits
- 310,000 - 560,000 flu hospitalizations
- 18,000 - 46,000 flu deaths



## Flu figures show 125 child deaths, record-high hospitalizations in young children

Feb 28, 2020; AAP

Another 20 children have died of flu, with the total number up to 125 so far this season, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC).

The death toll at this point in the season is higher than the same time period in every season since reporting began in 2004-'05, except for the H1N1 pandemic in 2009.

Most pediatric deaths (87 of 125) have been associated with influenza B viruses. The CDC continues to recommend everyone six months and older get vaccinated. This season's flu vaccines are reducing children's doctor visits for the illness by 55%, according to CDC estimates.



## Researchers Step Up Efforts To Develop A 'Universal' Flu Vaccine

Feb. 27, 2020; NPR

In the future, one vaccination could provide protection from multiple flu strains, and perhaps last longer than a single season. The push to develop a universal flu vaccine has intensified in recent years, given unusually severe flu outbreaks and emerging pandemic strains, like the swine flu.

One study that adds to the research to develop a universal influenza vaccine is called "Hotel Influenza", a 10-day quarantine unit where researchers study how the human immune system fights the flu by infecting participants with the live virus.

Influenza viruses are notoriously difficult because they change so often, so a universal vaccine still poses difficulties. "It's like running after a haystack that's on the back of a wagon," says Hoft, who is leading the Hotel Influenza study. "And it's moving while you're looking for the needle."

"We're looking at internal proteins inside the virus," Hoft says, adding that these proteins are often much more consistent across different influenza strains. "We're trying to induce a T cell response against those internal proteins."



## Is the Coronavirus Worse Than the Flu? Here's How the 2 Illnesses Compare

Feb. 26, 2020; Health

Both viruses—flu and coronavirus—are highly infectious diseases with similar symptoms, transmission, and prevention methods, but is one necessarily worse than the other? At this point, the best option for keeping yourself infection-free is washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; not touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands; avoiding close contact with people who are sick; staying home when you are sick; and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

**Flu:**

While the majority of people infected with the flu will be fully recovered in about two weeks, for some people (most often those with compromised immune systems), the flu can lead to complications like pneumonia. According to recent data from the CDC, this year just 1% of people suffering from the flu have been hospitalized.

**Coronavirus:**

A recent investigation by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Protection, published in *JAMA*, analyzed data compiled between Dec. 31, 09 and Feb. 11, 2020 of 44,672 confirmed cases in China—80% of which were considered mild, and only 4.7% were critical.

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## **Study ranks relative effectiveness of influenza vaccines in seniors**

**Feb. 26, 2020; University of Minnesota**

Nearly half a million influenza-related hospitalizations and 12,000 to 56,000 deaths occur each year in the United States, most in people 65 and older. Vaccination is the main tool to prevent flu, but its effectiveness in older people has been low during recent seasons, particularly in those in which H3N2 viruses dominated.

A new study of relative flu vaccine effectiveness in people 65+ compared egg-based adjuvanted, high-dose, and egg-based quadrivalent vaccines. Researchers found that egg-based adjuvanted and high-dose (HD) flu vaccines had slightly higher relative vaccine effectiveness (RVE) than egg-based quadrivalent (four-strain) vaccines in nearly 13 million Medicare beneficiaries 65 and older during the 2018-19 flu season.

Read the full journal article [here](#).

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## **Florida Bill Could Allow Pharmacists to Test and Treat Flu**

**Feb. 21, 2020; Tampa Bay Times**

FFF Chief Operating Officer, Serese Marotta, published an op-ed to the Tampa Bay Times to share why she supports HB 389 and SB 714.

The bills would allow licensed pharmacists to offer testing and treatment for the flu after taking an eight-hour certification provided by the state's Board of Medicine. Pharmacists would be required to follow up with patients three days after visits.

Marotta states, "We encourage Florida's state leaders to strongly consider supporting HB 389 and SB 714. By supporting this legislation, we can help protect our children, our families, and our communities against the flu."

Learn more about these bills: [HB 389](#), [SB 714](#).

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## **World Health Organization releases flu vaccine recommendations for 2020 - 2021**



## Feb. 28, 2020; WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released its recommendations for the composition of influenza virus vaccines for use during the 2020 - 2021 northern hemisphere influenza season. The WHO is recommending next season's flu vaccines include changes for H1N1, H3N2, and B/Victoria.

For next steps, an advisory committee from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will meet on March 4, 2020 to discuss and make recommendations on the selection of strains to be included in the influenza virus vaccines for the 2020 - 2021 influenza season.

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