



# Updated Guide for Governors on Managing the 2024-2025 Respiratory Illness Season



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## What's Happening This Season?

This year's influenza season (Fall 2024 – Winter 2025) has been unexpectedly severe. As of mid-February 2025, flu cases and associated emergency department visits continue to rise, leading to the worst season in more than 20 years. While flu has been high, [COVID-19](#) and [RSV rates](#) across the country have been lower than in previous winters. Looking at this season's preliminary data can help us know what to expect as we assess the impact on individuals, families, businesses, and the healthcare system:

- [Preliminary estimates](#) for 2024-2025 show between 37 – 66 million people infected so far
- [Hospitals have been](#) treating an estimated 480,000 – 1 million flu patients this season already, and weekly cases continue to rise. Last season's estimate for flu hospitalizations was about 470,000 for the entire season.
- Tens of thousands of people have died due to respiratory viruses this season. An estimated 21,000 – 100,000 people have died from [flu](#), 14,085 from [COVID-19](#), and 7,700 – 18,000 from [RSV](#).

This year, at the height of these outbreaks thus far, states have seen:

- 3.8 [RSV](#) patients in hospitals per 100,000 population
- 4.2 [COVID-19](#) patients in hospitals per 100,000 population
- 23.4 [flu](#) patients in hospitals per 100,000 population

**Current Seasonal Severity:** Based on the recent decline in reported outpatient [influenza-like illness \(ILI\)](#), flu like illness are still high but declining and the remainder of the influenza season may be more mild. Follow the [In-Season Severity Assessment](#) and [RESP-Net](#) for the latest data.

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## As Things Get Tougher

As the respiratory illness season continues, Governors may need to:

- Maintain situational awareness of supply chain shortages (e.g., I.V. solution) and provide guidance or seek alternative resources as needed
- Help hospitals work together to transfer patients when needed
- Support efforts to provide needed tests to schools and workplaces
- Promote awareness of virus impacts and steps individuals can take to protect themselves

## Keys to Success

To help these actions succeed, Governors and their staff can:

- Keep people informed about what's happening and where to seek care
- Make sure hospitals have what they need
- Help schools and workplaces create healthy environments

**As of 2023, there are new tools for preventing RSV:** There are new vaccines for [infants](#), [pregnant women](#), and [older adults](#). All vaccines are approved by the [FDA](#) and recommended by the [CDC](#). Governors may consider working with their health policy advisors and health departments to increase public awareness and utilization of these vaccines.

## Staying on Top of Things

Governors can track the respiratory illness season through the CDC's [interactive dashboards](#) and by partnering with their state health department.

Most respiratory seasons are manageable with good planning and teamwork. Having clear plans for both normal and tough scenarios can help states protect their communities while keeping the healthcare system running smoothly.

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