

Flu Doubles Up in New Mexico

Flu activity increases around New Mexico; double what it was this time last year

SANTA FE —The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) reports a spike in the number of flu cases across New Mexico in the last few weeks. Compared to the same time last year, influenza-like illness (ILI) activity is twice as great, with the current flu season not yet reaching its peak.

The number of flu related deaths has risen in New Mexico to six, and flu related hospitalizations, especially among residents age 65 and older have been steadily increasing since the beginning of the flu season in October. Since October, NMDOH has investigated 12 flu outbreaks in facilities around the state, seven of them in the last few weeks.

“We have not seen an increase in flu activity this early in the winter in the past five years,” said Department of Health Secretary Lynn Gallagher. “No matter what, the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from flu is to get vaccinated. Everyone six months and older who have not yet gotten vaccinated should get their flu vaccine as soon as possible.”

Flu vaccine is produced every year and is always made to address the top flu strains of the previous season.

Flu shots remain highly recommended for the following high-risk groups:

- [Pregnant women](#) (any trimester) and up to two weeks post-partum
- [Children younger than 5 years](#), but especially children younger than 2 years old
- [People age 65 years and older](#)
- People of any age with certain [chronic medical conditions](#) like asthma, diabetes, and lung or heart disease and those with immunosuppression from medication or disease
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including healthcare personnel and caregivers of babies younger than 6 months
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives
- People who are morbidly obese

People in these high-risk groups should also consider seeing their healthcare provider to be evaluated for antiviral medications if they develop flu symptoms. Flu symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and/or muscle aches. Antiviral medications can lessen the severity of the symptoms and potential bad outcomes including hospitalization and even death, and help high-risk patients recover sooner.

NMDOH also recommends that you ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you need the pneumococcal vaccine which can be given at the same time as flu vaccine. Influenza frequently leads to pneumonia that can be prevented by the pneumococcal vaccine.

The Department offers flu vaccinations while supplies last for people without insurance or who are otherwise not able to get vaccinated. For a list of public health offices in New Mexico, visit <https://nmhealth.org/>. Those with Medicaid or other insurance who go to public health offices are asked to bring their insurance card.