

New Mexico Department of Health Marks the End of the 2025-2026 Respiratory Disease Season

April 23, 2026

Background:

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is seeing low respiratory disease activity statewide, according to the metrics used to track the respiratory season, and considers the respiratory season to be over. Sporadic COVID-19, influenza, and/or RSV activity will continue to occur outside of the season and it is possible to see outbreaks of these diseases in the warmer months. COVID-19 activity remains unpredictable, and we may see higher levels of community transmission before the fall.

Outbreaks should be reported to the on-call epidemiologist 24/7/365 at 1-833-796-8773 (1-833-SWNUSE). During periods of low influenza activity, an influenza outbreak is defined as one confirmed case of influenza by PCR test and any other cases of ILI in the same geographic location. ILI is defined as fever of greater than 100° F and cough and/or sore throat. Any rapid positive influenza results should be confirmed by PCR before declaring an outbreak during low influenza activity. COVID-19 outbreaks are defined as two or more probable or confirmed COVID-19 cases in a long-term care facility and should also be reported to NMDOH. Facilities should also report COVID-19 or influenza outbreaks to the New Mexico Health Care Authority Division of Health Improvement (DHI).

NMDOH reminds providers and their staff that in accordance with New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 7.4.3.13, respiratory diseases are reportable for the following situations:

- Laboratory-confirmed hospitalizations for influenza
- Influenza-associated pediatric death
- Avian or novel influenza
- Acute illness or condition of any type involving large numbers of persons in the same geographic area (outbreaks)

As of 2026, COVID-19-associated and RSV-associated pediatric deaths are now nationally notifiable conditions and should be reported to NMDOH.

The 2025-2026 respiratory disease season marked the fourth consecutive year where peak respiratory illness levels, specifically ILI and influenza emergency department visits, were above what had been seen during the ten years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classified the season as moderate overall; however, among children (aged 0-17 years), it was classified as severe. While COVID-19 and RSV activity did not reach peaks that were seen in previous seasons, there was a significant spike in influenza and COVID-19 discharge diagnoses and hospitalizations around Christmas and New Year's. Peak weekly influenza hospitalization rates for all age groups were among the highest seen in the past 10 flu seasons. Additionally, due to the late start of the RSV season and high rates of hospitalization among young children, NMDOH still encourages monoclonal antibodies (nirsevimab or clesrovimab) be given to infants under two years old through April.

EPIDEMIOLOGY AND RESPONSE

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As we move forward with low levels of activity, NMDOH reminds healthcare facilities that now is the best time to evaluate employee vaccination policies, visitation policies, and outbreak response procedures for the coming influenza season. Healthcare facilities are encouraged to monitor CDC guidance on infection control practices for respiratory diseases (links provided below).

Recommendations for Clinicians:

- Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette should be implemented beginning at the first point of contact with a potentially infected person to prevent the transmission of all respiratory tract infections in the facility. Encourage all persons within the facility to cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue. Throw all tissue in the trash after use. Alternatively, provide facemasks to people with symptoms of respiratory infection (e.g., cough) or who have recently had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection and advise those older than 2 years of age to wear it while they are in the facility unless there are medical contraindications.
- Maintain good hand hygiene by washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth without cleaning hands.
- Make the means for appropriate hand cleansing readily available within the facility, including intake areas, visitor entrances and exits, visitation rooms, common areas, and staff-restricted areas, in addition to lavatories and food preparation and dining areas. The means for hand cleansing are ideally running water, soap, and hand drying machines or paper towels and waste baskets; alternatively, except in lavatories and food preparation areas, alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used.
- Empirically apply appropriate Transmission-Based Precautions, including placement in a single-person room, when examining a patient with known or suspected respiratory infection. Precautions should be based on the clinical syndrome and the likely etiologic agents (e.g., which respiratory viruses are circulating in the community, contact with someone known to have influenza) and modified once the pathogen is identified or a transmissible infectious etiology is ruled out.
- Clean all common areas within the facility routinely and immediately, when visibly soiled, with the cleaning agents normally used in these areas. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap. Cups and utensils should not be shared until after washing.

Additional Resources:

- Clinical Signs and Symptoms of Influenza (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/signs-symptoms/>)
- Infection Control Guidance: Respiratory Viruses [Infection Control Guidance: Respiratory Viruses | Project Firstline | CDC](#)
- Infection Control Guidance: SARS-CoV-2 [Infection Control: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 \(SARS-CoV-2\) | CDC](#)
- Isolation Precautions Guideline [Isolation Precautions Guideline | Infection Control | CDC](#)
- Preventing Transmission of Viral Respiratory Pathogens in Healthcare Settings [Preventing Transmission of Viral Respiratory Pathogens in Healthcare Settings | Infection Control | CDC](#)
- Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes [Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes | LTCFs | CDC](#)
- Influenza in long-term care facilities <https://www.nmhca.org/video-trainings/>

- Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings
[Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings | CDC](#)
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New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving Important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the “**New Mexico Health Alert Network**” default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.