



NC DEPARTMENT OF **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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Division of Public Health

To: All North Carolina Clinicians
From: Erica Wilson, MD, MPH, Medical Epidemiologist
Subject: Increase in Respiratory Illness (2 pages)
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The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) routinely monitors the activity of respiratory viruses in the state using multiple surveillance systems. Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, many seasonal respiratory viruses, including influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), have not followed their normal seasonal patterns. **Current surveillance shows an increase in activity of multiple respiratory viruses other than SARS-CoV-2 across the state, including influenza, RSV, and rhinovirus/enterovirus.** Clinicians should be aware of this early increase that may predict a challenging season and follow NC DPH and CDC guidance and recommendations for the following conditions:

Influenza

Respiratory virus surveillance data published weekly on NCDHHS [dashboard](#) show an increase of emergency departments visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) as well as an increase of positive influenza tests at NC hospital-based Public Health Epidemiologist (PHE) facilities. [CDC weekly surveillance data](#) also indicate an early increase in seasonal influenza activity with the southeast and south-central areas of the country reporting the highest level of activity.

Recommended actions:

- Recommend and offer flu vaccine for all your patients, particularly for those at high risk of complications and people who care for people at high risk. Offer flu and [COVID-19 vaccine/booster](#) at the same visit.
- Educate your patients on [basic protective measures](#) and the importance of staying home when sick.
- Follow NCDHHS recommendations as outlined in the providers' memos section of [NCDHHS flu website](#), including considering early antiviral treatment when indicated.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Recent data reported by [PHE network](#) show a substantial increase in detections of positive RSV tests. This is in line with [national RSV trends](#). This increase has the potential to strain pediatric hospital capacity, particularly in combination with increases in other respiratory illnesses.

Recommended actions:

- Be aware of the [typical clinical presentation of RSV](#) for different age groups and consider testing patients with acute respiratory illness and negative SARS-CoV-2 and flu tests.

- Be familiar with AAP's guidance on [RSV prophylaxis](#) for certain high-risk individuals and, if applicable, NC [Medicaid Procedures for Authorization of Palivizumab](#).

Rhinoviruses and/or Enteroviruses, including EV-D68

On September 9, 2022, CDC issued a [Health Alert Network \(HAN\)](#) about increase in pediatric hospitalizations in patients with severe respiratory illness who also tested positive for rhinovirus and/or enterovirus as well as guidance on acute flaccid myelitis (AFM), which has been associated with enterovirus D68 (EV-D68).

Recommended actions:

- Consider testing of respiratory specimens for rhinoviruses and enteroviruses when the cause of respiratory infection in severely ill patients is unclear.
- Consider EV-D68 as a possible cause of acute, severe respiratory illness (with or without fever) in children.
- Strongly consider AFM in patients with acute flaccid limb weakness, especially after respiratory illness or fever, and follow [NCDHHS guidance](#) for reporting of all suspected cases.

COVID-19

Metrics on the [NCDHHS COVID-19 data dashboard](#) show that COVID-19 activity has been decreasing in recent weeks. However, an increase in COVID-19 transmission in the coming weeks is likely based on the emergence of new, more transmissible subvariants and increasing case trends in Europe.

Recommended actions:

- Offer and encourage the new bivalent booster. Additional vaccine information and guidance can be found [here](#).
- Educate your patients about the importance of [measures to protect themselves and each other from COVID-19](#).
- Continue to offer testing. NCDHHS offers a variety of support options for [COVID-19 testing](#).
- Don't delay treatment for patients who are more likely to get very sick. Consult NCDHHS [therapeutics information and resources](#).

Please report suspected clusters of influenza, RSV, or severe respiratory illness to your local health department or to the NC DPH Epidemiologist on call at 919-733-3419.

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