



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Respiratory Virus Levels Trending Down Across Illinois

**CHICAGO** – Illinois’ overall respiratory virus level has dropped to [Low](#) in recent weeks and all counties in Illinois are now at Low level for [COVID-19 hospitalizations](#) for the first time since October, CDC data indicates as of the week ending March 23. The total number of COVID-19 hospitalizations in Illinois declined 20% during the same week according to the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#).

“As we celebrate the start of spring, I am happy to report a continued decline in respiratory viruses,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “IDPH is continuing to closely monitor the data, but we are reassured by our latest information. As flu season typically continues until May, we encourage Illinois residents to keep using all of the tools available to keep themselves and their loved ones safe, especially those most vulnerable to severe health outcomes.”

IDPH endorsed the recommendation made in February by the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for a second dose of the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines for those over 65 years of age. Those who are immunosuppressed remain eligible to receive additional doses 2 months after their previous dose. A [CDC presentation](#) that was provided for the ACIP meeting included preliminary data that showed that 96% of those hospitalized for COVID-19 in October and November 2023, had not received the updated Covid shot last fall.

If people do develop symptoms of a respiratory illness – including coughing, sneezing, sore throat, a runny nose or fever – IDPH recommends staying home and away from others to avoid spreading illness. If you need to seek medical care, you should wear a mask to limit the risk to others – or try to schedule a telehealth appointment. In addition, public health experts urge anyone who has been recently exposed to COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses to wear a mask when in crowded areas, and if visiting someone at high risk for severe disease. For more on when and where to use a mask, [click HERE](#).

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To help keep the public informed about conditions around the state, IDPH maintains an [Infectious Respiratory Disease Surveillance Dashboard](#) that is updated weekly on Fridays. This report provides the public the latest data on hospital visits, seasonal trends, lab test positivity and demographic data

Every household in the U.S. is eligible to receive four free at-home tests through the [COVID.gov](#) website. IDPH has also made available a single swab triple-test for Flu/RSV and COVID-19, at no cost, to high risk congregate care settings and local health departments.

For those who are uninsured or under-insured, the CDC launched the [Bridge Access Program](#) last year that covers the cost of COVID-19 vaccines. The [Vaccines for Children Program](#) covers all ACIP recommended vaccines for eligible children, including nirsevimab for RSV protection.

For treatment of COVID-19, Illinoisans who experience symptoms can access no cost-share telehealth services through the [SIU School of Medicine COVID Test to Treat](#) services or call (217) 545-5100. An additional option is the [NIH Test to Treat line](#) or call 1-800-682-2829 to get access to no-cost care.

The federal government has established a website that provides an all-purpose toolkit with information on how to obtain masks, treatment, vaccines and testing resources for all areas of the country at: <https://www.covid.gov/>.

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