

INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026 (Fourth week, up to 25.01.2026)

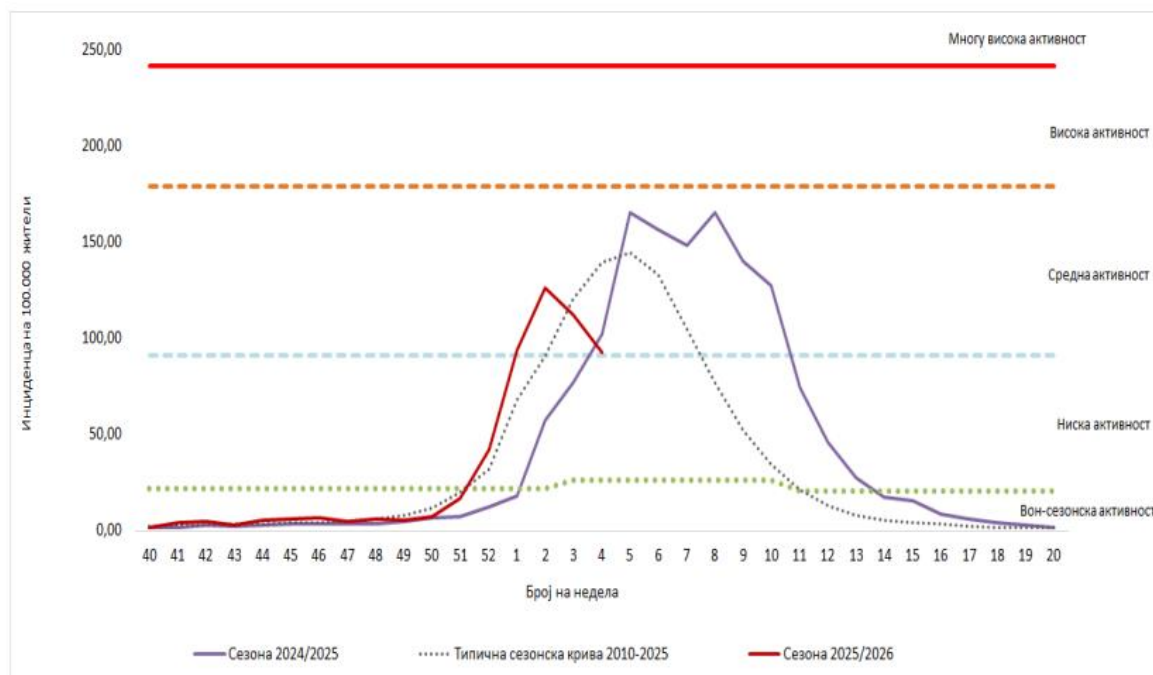
Weekly data

During the fourth week of 2026 (19.01–25.01.2026), 1,708 cases ($I = 93.0/100,000$) of group notifications of patients with influenza/influenza-like illness were reported in Macedonia, which is 17.2% fewer compared to the previous week ($n = 2,062$).

The number of reported cases this week compared to the fourth week of the previous season ($n = 1,878$) has decreased by 9.1%, and compared to the number for the fourth week of the typical epidemic curve (modeled from the last 15 seasons) ($n = 2,566$), it has decreased by 33.4%. (Graph 1)

During the fourth week, the reported incidence is above the weekly threshold for medium activity ($I = 90.84/100,000$) (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Intensity levels and weekly distribution of influenza/influenza-like illness cases according to the expected epidemic curve 2010–2025, season 2024/2025 and season 2025/2026.



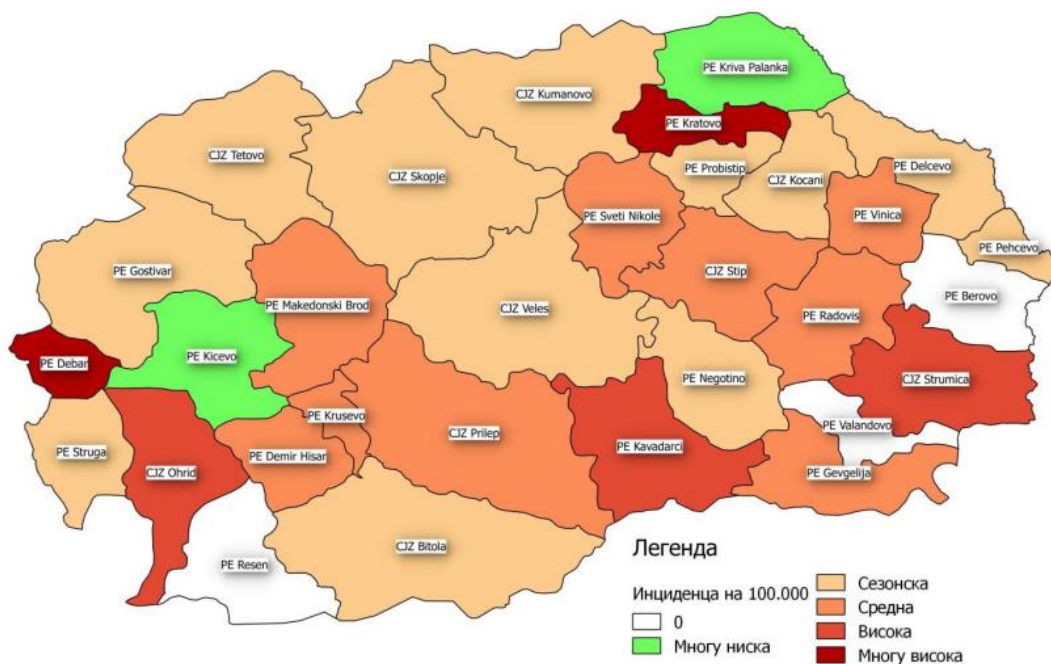
Regarding the age distribution, 1,029 cases are among persons aged 15–64 years, 253 are persons aged over 65 years, 243 are children aged 5–14 years, and 183 are children aged 0–4 years. The highest incidence (189.6/100,000) is registered among children aged 0–4 years.

The cases were reported from 28 Centers for Public Health/Regional Units (CPH/RU): Skopje – 526, Strumica – 178, Ohrid – 113, Prilep – 111, Kumanovo – 102, Tetovo – 84, Shtip – 78,

Kavadarci – 77, Debar – 67, Bitola – 55, Gevgelija – 54, Veles – 42, Radovish – 32, while in Gostivar, Sveti Nikole, Kratovo, Negotino, Struga, Kochani, Vinica, Makedonski Brod, Krushevo, Delchevo, Probishtip, Demir Hisar, Kichevo, Kriva Palanka, and Pehchevo, the number of cases is fewer than 30.

In two CPH/RUs (Debar, Kratovo) very high activity is recorded; in three (Ohrid, Kavadarci, Strumica) high activity is recorded; medium activity is registered in nine CPH/RUs; seasonal activity is recorded in 12; while in two units very low influenza virus activity is recorded. (Cartogram 1)

Cartogram 1. Level of influenza activity according to incidence per 100,000 population, fourth week 2026.



During the fourth week of 2026, no influenza-associated deaths were reported.

VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE

During the fourth reporting week of 2026, 85 specimens from routine and SARI surveillance were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health for laboratory testing, tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

Of the total tested specimens, 15 positive influenza cases were detected: 8 Influenza A(H3), 6 Influenza A(H1)pdm09, and one case of unsubtype Influenza A.

Additionally, 5 cases of RSV were detected (all RSV type B).

During the past week, no positive cases of SARS-CoV-2 were detected.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative Data

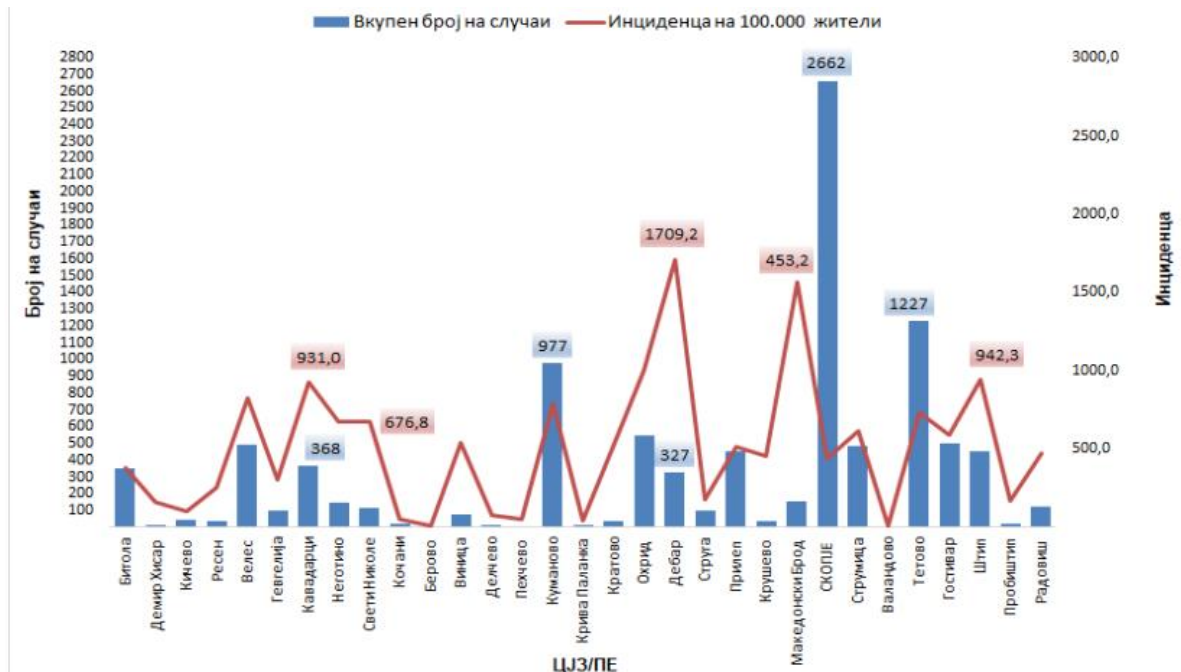
In the 2025/2026 season, the total number of influenza/influenza-like illness cases amounts to 9,917 ($I = 539.9/100,000$).

Compared to the same period of the previous season ($n = 5,698$), the number of reported cases has increased by 74.0%, and compared to the model based on the last 15 seasons ($n = 9,622$), an increase of 3.1% is registered.

Cumulatively, cases have been reported from all Centers for Public Health/Regional Units (CPH/RU). The highest number of cases ($n = 2,662$) is registered in the territory of Skopje, while the highest cumulative incidence ($I = 1,709.2/100,000$) is registered in the territory of Debar ($n = 327$). (Table 1 in the Annex)

Regarding the distribution of cases by age groups, the highest number of cases has been reported in the age group covering the largest portion of the population (15–64 years) – 5,841 cases (58.9%), while the highest incidence (1,133.4/100,000) is registered in the 0–4 years age group and in the 5–14 years age group (806.7/100,000). (Graph 2, Table 1 in the Annex)

Graph 2. Distribution of seasonal influenza cases by CPH/RU and incidence per 100,000 population, season 2025/2026.



Distribution of seasonal influenza/influenza-like illness cases by month (Table 1 in the Annex):

- October – 338 cases or 3.4%
- November – 438 cases or 4.4%
- December – 1,324 cases or 13.4%
- January – 7,817 cases or 78.8%

During the influenza season, three influenza-associated deaths have been registered.

VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative Data

Since the beginning of the 2025/2026 season, up to week 4/2026, a total of 681 specimens from routine and sentinel SARI surveillance have been received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of North Macedonia. All received specimens were tested for the presence of influenza virus, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

A total of 99 positive influenza cases were detected:

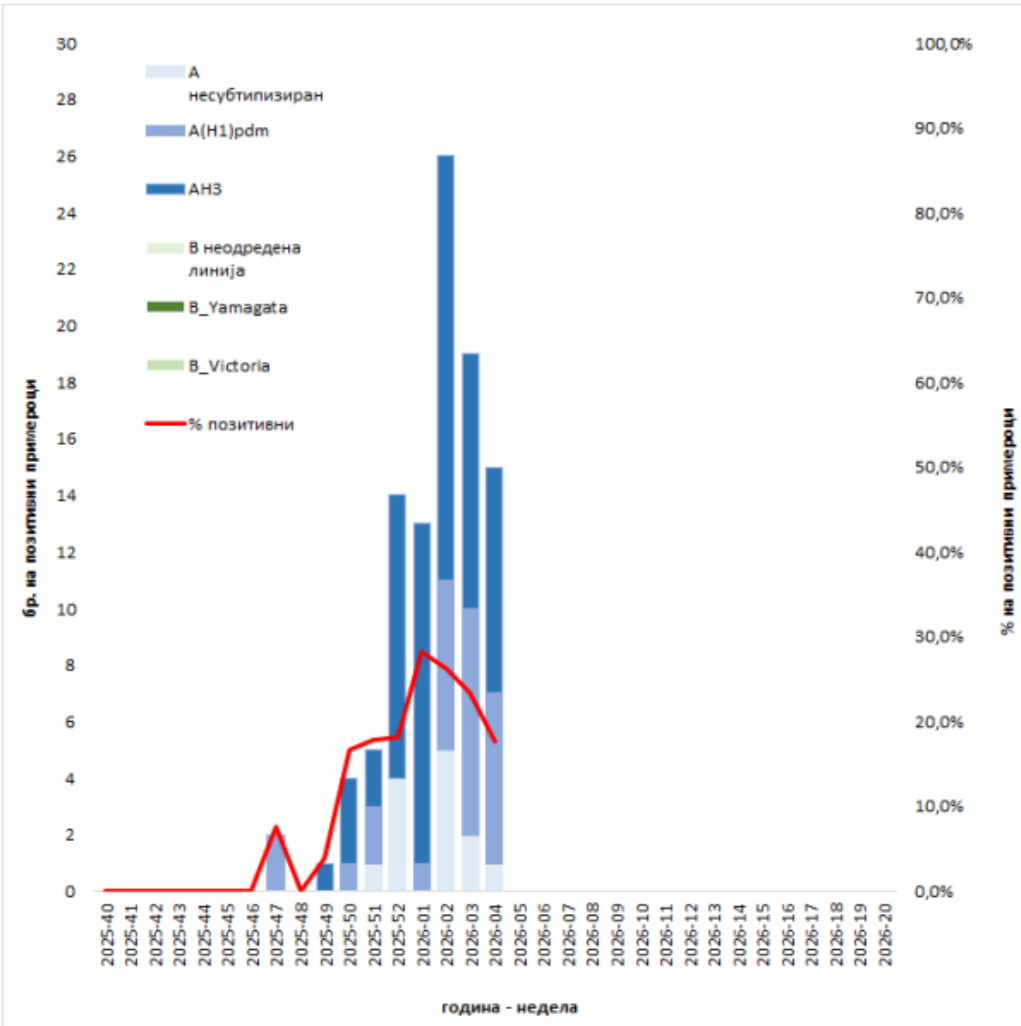
- Influenza A – 99
 - Influenza A(H1)pdm09 – 26 (26.3%)
 - Influenza A(H3) – 60 (60.6%)
 - Influenza A – unsubtype – 13 (13.1%)
- Influenza B – 0

Six positive cases of SARS-CoV-2 were registered.

Thirty-one positive cases of respiratory syncytial virus were registered (RSV unsubtype – 2, RSV-A – 6, and RSV-B – 23).

Additionally, five other respiratory viruses were detected in the tested samples.

Graph 2. Weekly distribution of the number and percentage of positive influenza samples, routine and sentinel surveillance, Republic of North Macedonia, 2025/2026.



EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

During the fourth week of 2026, the decreasing trend in the number of cases and the incidence of influenza-like illnesses on a weekly basis continues. The reported incidence remains above the weekly threshold for medium activity. The results obtained from virological influenza surveillance indicate regional geographic activity of the influenza virus. The positivity rate has remained above the 10% threshold for seven consecutive weeks.

According to these data, influenza virus activity in Macedonia is of medium intensity.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Source: <https://sezonskigrip.mk/>

General influenza prevention measures apply to all acute respiratory infections and can be highly beneficial, especially if implemented throughout the entire winter period:

- Avoid gatherings and staying in crowded indoor spaces; in particular, avoid close contact with people who are ill or suspected to be ill – those who are coughing, sneezing, or have a fever.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use a disinfectant.
- Keep living spaces warm and ventilate them frequently.
- Dress warmly in layers; warm baths are recommended.
- Drink warm beverages (teas and soups), freshly squeezed fruit juices, and lemon water.
- Consume fresh products rich in vitamins and minerals, preferably fruits and vegetables that are essential for the body. Products rich in vitamin C (citrus fruits, lemons, oranges) are especially recommended. If fresh food products are not always available, multivitamin drinks and supplements may also be used.
- Practice a healthy lifestyle and habits, including good sleep and rest, healthy nutrition, maintaining physical and mental activity, and reducing stress.

A strong immune system will help you stay healthy or cope more easily with influenza and influenza-like illnesses. However, even if you are perfectly healthy and have a strong immune system, you may still become ill with influenza or an influenza-like illness.

What to do if you become ill with influenza?

Follow these recommendations:

- Stay at home and do not go to work, school, or places where many people gather.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids and consume light food.
- Avoid close contact with household members and do not receive visitors while you are ill.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of tissues in a waste bin after use.
- Wear a protective mask when in contact with household members, especially when coughing or sneezing.
- Practice frequent and thorough handwashing with warm water and soap.
- Use wet wipes containing alcohol or hand disinfectants.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands.
- Frequently ventilate the room where you are staying while ill.
- Keep your surroundings clean – disinfect objects and surfaces with household hygiene products.
- If you are over 65 years old or have chronic diseases, or if your symptoms worsen or persist for several days, seek medical attention.

INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Vaccination against seasonal influenza is the most effective protection against this disease. The Institute of Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, especially for individuals belonging to the so-called risk groups (in accordance with WHO recommendations): elderly persons (over 65 years of age), children aged 6–59 months, persons older than 6 months with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and healthcare workers.

- For the 2025/2026 season, the Ministry of Health provided a free quadrivalent vaccine in a total quantity of 80,000 doses, intended for priority population groups.

Vaccination began on 16.10.2025 and is carried out in the Centers for Public Health (CPH) with their Regional Units (RU) and/or Health Centers. Vaccination of healthcare workers in Skopje is carried out at the Institute of Public Health.

According to data from the Administration for Electronic Health, from the beginning of vaccination until the closing of this report, a total of 77,263 persons from risk categories have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

- An additional 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines have been procured by the Centers for Public Health for the remaining population who do not belong to the above-mentioned groups. These vaccines are available for a certain financial fee, and vaccination is carried out in the Centers for Public Health and their Regional Units.

According to data from the Administration for Electronic Health, a total of 1,836 persons have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

As of the fourth week, a total of 79,099 persons in Macedonia have been vaccinated with either free or commercial vaccines.

EUROPEAN REGION

Source: <https://erviss.org/>

According to the ERVISS report published for week 3 of 2026 on influenza virus activity across the WHO European Region:

- Rates of influenza-like illness and/or acute respiratory infection are above baseline levels in 24 of 31 countries in the WHO European Region.
- Influenza activity is decreasing in most countries and areas but remains high and widespread. The positivity rate in sentinel primary healthcare surveillance is still increasing in several countries and among children at the regional level.
- Persons aged 65 years or older continue to account for the majority of influenza-related hospitalizations.
- Influenza A(H3) remains the dominant circulating virus, but the proportion of A(H1) cases is gradually increasing.
- Regional indicators for SARS-CoV-2 activity have decreased to baseline levels.
- The RSV positivity rate has increased among patients in primary healthcare and in sentinel hospitals, although with lower testing volume. Hospitalizations are also increasing, with the highest proportion among children under 5 years of age, followed by those aged 65 years and older.