

INFLUENZA SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, SEASON 2025/2026 (Week 49, up to 07.12.2025)

WEEKLY DATA

Epidemiological Surveillance

During week 49 of 2025 (01–07 December 2025), in the Republic of North Macedonia, 96 influenza cases were reported ($I = 5.2/100,000$ population), based on group notifications of influenza/influenza-like illness (ILI), which is 15.8% fewer compared to the previous week ($n = 114$).

Compared to week 49 of the previous season, an increase of 9.1% was observed (88 cases registered), while compared to the model for the past 15 seasons ($n = 148$), a decrease of 35% was registered.

Cases this week were reported in 13 Centers for Public Health (CPH/Regional Units), specifically: Kumanovo – 17, Ohrid – 12, Tetovo – 11, Makedonski Brod – 10, Kavadarci – 9, Skopje – 8, Prilep – 6, Shtip and Radovish – 5 each, Bitola and Vinica – 4 each, Strumica – 3, and Gostivar – 2 reported cases.

By age group:

- 15–64 years: 85 cases
- Over 65 years: 6 cases
- 5–14 years: 4 cases
- 0–4 years: 1 case

The reported incidence remains below the weekly threshold for seasonal influenza activity ($I = 22.03/100,000$), meaning the threshold for entry into the influenza season has not yet been reached.

Virological Surveillance

During week 49, 26 samples from routine and SARI (Severe Acute Respiratory Infection) surveillance were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health for laboratory testing, simultaneously tested for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

Of the total tested samples:

- 1 positive case of Influenza A(H3) was detected
- 2 RSV-positive cases were detected (both RSV type B)
- No SARS-CoV-2 positive cases were confirmed

CUMULATIVE DATA

Epidemiological Surveillance

In the 2025/2026 season, the total number of influenza/ILI cases is 872 ($I = 47.5/100,000$).

Compared to the same period last season (n = 542), the number of reported cases increased by 60.9%, while compared to the 15-season model (n = 764), a 35% decrease was registered.

Cumulatively, cases have been reported from 16 CPH/Regional Units. The highest number of cases was registered in Gostivar (n = 239), while the highest cumulative incidence (I = 405.5/100,000) was recorded in Makedonski Brod.

By age distribution, the largest number of cases was reported in the 15–64 age group – 669 cases (76.7%).

Virological Surveillance

Since the beginning of the 2025/26 season, 241 samples from routine and SARI surveillance have been received at the virology laboratory for testing (Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV).

Of the total tested samples:

- 5 positive for SARS-CoV-2
- 5 positive for RSV (1 untyped RSV and 4 RSV-B)
- 3 positive for Influenza (2 Influenza A(H1)pdm09 and 1 A(H3))

GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

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

General protection measures against influenza apply to all acute respiratory infections and are especially useful when implemented throughout the entire winter period:

- Avoid gatherings and staying in crowded indoor spaces, especially close contact with sick or suspected individuals (coughing, sneezing, fever).
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use hand disinfectant.
- Keep indoor spaces warm and ventilate frequently.
- Dress warmly in layers; take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (tea, soups), fresh fruit juices, and lemon water.
- Consume fresh products rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruits and vegetables. Vitamin C-rich products (citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges) are particularly recommended. If fresh foods are not always available, multivitamin drinks and supplements may be used.
- Practice a healthy lifestyle: adequate sleep and rest, healthy diet, maintain physical and mental activity, reduce stress.

A strong immune system will help you stay healthy or cope more easily with influenza and influenza-like illness. However, even healthy individuals with strong immunity can become ill.

What to do if you get the flu?

- Stay home and do not go to work, school, or crowded places.

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids; eat light meals.
- Avoid close contact with household members; do not receive visitors while ill.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of it properly.
- Wear a protective mask when in contact with household members if coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Use alcohol-based wet wipes or hand disinfectant.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Frequently ventilate the room where you stay.
- Keep your surroundings clean (objects and surfaces).
- If you are over 65 years old, have chronic diseases, or symptoms worsen or persist for several days – seek medical assistance.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

Weekly variations in the number and incidence of influenza-like illnesses are observed but still remain within off-season activity levels. Although the first influenza cases have been registered, the positivity rate remains below 10%. According to these data, influenza virus activity remains sporadic and of low intensity.

INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Seasonal influenza vaccination is the most effective protection against the disease. The Institute of Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, especially for high-risk groups (according to WHO recommendations):

- Elderly persons (over 65 years)
- Children aged 6–59 months
- Persons older than 6 months with chronic diseases
- Pregnant women
- Healthcare workers

For the 2025/2026 season, the Ministry of Health provided 80,000 doses of free quadrivalent vaccine for priority population groups.

Vaccination began on 16 October 2025 and is carried out in Centers for Public Health and their regional units and/or Health Centers. Vaccination of healthcare workers in Skopje is conducted at the Institute of Public Health.

According to the e-Health Administration, from the start of vaccination until the closing of this report, 76,702 persons from risk categories have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

An additional 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines were procured by the Centers for Public Health for the general population not included in priority groups. These are available for a fee and administered at the Centers for Public Health and their regional units.

According to the e-Health Administration, 1,749 persons have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

In total, 78,451 persons in the Republic of North Macedonia have been vaccinated with either free or commercial vaccines.

EUROPEAN REGION

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

According to the ERVISS report published for week 48 of 2025:

Rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or acute respiratory infection (ARI) are above baseline levels in 15 of 33 countries and areas in the WHO European Region reporting data.

Influenza is widespread across the European Region, with several countries reporting increased intensity, detections, and positivity rates. Influenza positivity in sentinel surveillance is highest among children aged 5–14 years. A higher proportion of hospital admissions occurs among persons aged 65 years or older. Influenza type A(H3) remains the dominant circulating virus.

Regional indicators for SARS-CoV-2 activity continue to decline.

RSV detections and positivity rates continue to gradually increase regionally, with the highest rates observed in children under 5 years of age.

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