

## **INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026**

(Week 50, up to 14.12.2025)

### **Weekly data**

In the Republic of North Macedonia, 126 cases of influenza ( $I=6.9/100,000$  inhabitants) were reported as part of group reports for influenza/flu-like illnesses, which is 31.3% more than the previous week ( $n=96$ ). Compared to the 50th week of the previous season ( $n=118$ ), there is an increase of 6.8%, while in comparison with the model for the last 15 seasons ( $n=216$ ), a decrease of 41.6% is observed.

The reported cases this week were registered in 15 public health centers (PHC/RU), with the following distribution: Tetovo – 30, Kumanovo – 20, Macedonian Brod – 18, Skopje – 15, Shtip – 12, and in Gostivar, Strumica, Struga, Debar, Ohrid, Vinica, Kochani, Sveti Nikole, Kavadarci, and Kichevo, less than 10 cases were reported. The highest incidence ( $178.0/100,000$  inhabitants) was recorded in Macedonian Brod.

Regarding age groups:

- 97 cases were reported in the 15-64 years age group,
- 16 in those over 65 years,
- 7 in children aged 5-14 years, and
- 6 in children aged 0-4 years.

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

### **Virological Surveillance**

During the 50th reporting week, the virological laboratory at the Institute of Public Health (IPH) of the Republic of North Macedonia received 24 samples for laboratory testing from the routine and SARI surveillance, tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

Out of the total samples tested, 4 positive cases of influenza were detected: three Influenza A(H3) and one Influenza A(H1)pdm. Additionally, one case of RSV (RSV type B) was detected. No SARS-CoV-2 positive cases were found.

### **Cumulative Data**

#### **Epidemiological Surveillance**

For the 2025/2026 season, the total number of cases of influenza/flu-like illnesses is 998 ( $I=54.3/100,000$ ).

Compared to the same period last season ( $n=660$ ), the number of reported cases has increased by 51.2%, and compared to the model of the last 15 seasons ( $n=980$ ), there is an increase of 1.9%.

Cumulatively, the reported cases come from 20 PHCs/PEs. The highest number of reported cases are from Gostivar (n=244) and Kumanovo (n=241), and the highest cumulative incidence (I=583.5/100,000) is reported in Macedonian Brod.

Regarding the distribution of cases by age group, the highest number of cases is in the age group 15-64 years – 766 cases (76.8%).

### **Virological Surveillance**

Since the start of the 2025/2026 season, up to the present time, 265 samples from the routine and SARI surveillance have been received by the virological laboratory at the IPH for laboratory testing, and were tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

Out of the total tested samples, 7 positive results for influenza were recorded: 3 Influenza A(H1)pdm09 and 4 Influenza A(H3).

Additionally, 5 positive results for SARS-CoV-2 and 6 positive results for RSV (non-subtyped RSV – 1 and RSV-B – 5) were detected.

### **General Preventive Measures**

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

General preventive measures for protection against influenza are aimed at all acute respiratory diseases and can be of great benefit, especially if applied throughout the entire winter period:

- Avoid gathering and staying in rooms with many people, especially avoiding close contact with people who are sick or suspected of being sick (coughing, sneezing, fever).
- Wash hands frequently with water and soap or disinfectant.
- Keep rooms warm and ventilate them frequently.
- It is recommended to wear warm, layered clothing and take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (teas, soups), freshly squeezed fruit juices, and water with lemon.
- Eat fresh products rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruits and vegetables, especially those rich in vitamin C (lemons, oranges).
- Practice a healthy lifestyle, including good sleep and rest, healthy food, physical and mental activity, and reducing stress.

A strong immune system will help you stay healthy or recover more easily from flu and flu-like illnesses. However, even if you are perfectly healthy and have a strong immune system, you can still catch the flu or a flu-like illness.

### **What to Do if You Get the Flu:**

Follow these recommendations:

- Stay at home and do not go to work, school, or places with large crowds.

- Rest, drink plenty of fluids, and eat light food.
- Avoid close contact with people you live with, and do not receive visitors while you are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. After use, throw it in the trash.
- Wear a protective mask when interacting with your close ones at home while coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Use wet wipes with alcohol or hand disinfectant.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands.
- Frequently ventilate the room where you are staying while you are sick.
- Keep your environment clean—items and surfaces—with household hygiene products.
- If you are over 65 years old, have chronic illnesses, or if your symptoms worsen or last more than a few days – seek medical help.

### **Epidemiological Comment**

There is variation in the number and incidence of flu-like illnesses on a weekly basis, but it is still within off-seasonal activity. Although the first cases of influenza have been registered, the positivity rate remains below 10%. According to these data, the activity of the influenza virus is still sporadic, with low intensity of circulation.

### **Influenza Vaccination**

Vaccination against seasonal influenza is the most effective protection against this disease. The Institute for Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, especially for those in the so-called risk groups (according to WHO recommendations):

- Elderly individuals (over 65 years)
- Children aged 6-59 months
- Individuals over 6 months with chronic diseases
- Pregnant women
- Healthcare workers

For the 2025/2026 season, the Ministry of Health has provided 80,000 doses of free quadrivalent vaccines for priority population groups. Vaccination started on October 16, 2025, and is being carried out at Public Health Centers (PHCs) with their Branch Units (BUs) and/or Health Homes. Healthcare workers in Skopje are being vaccinated at the Institute for Public Health.

According to the data from the Electronic Health Administration, a total of 76,944 individuals from the risk groups have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

Additionally, 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines have been purchased by the Public Health Centers for the rest of the population who do not fall into the above-mentioned groups. These vaccines can be obtained for a certain financial contribution, and vaccination is carried out at Public Health Centers with their Regional Units.

According to the data from the Electronic Health Administration, 1,786 individuals have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

In total, 78,730 individuals in North Macedonia have been vaccinated with either free or commercial vaccines.

## **European Region**

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

According to the ERVISS report published for the 49th week of 2025:

- Rates of flu-like illnesses (ILI) and/or acute respiratory infections (ARI) have increased above baseline levels in 19 out of 33 countries and areas in the WHO European Region that report data.
- Influenza is generally widespread across the European region, and more countries and areas are reporting increased intensity, detections, and positivity rates. The positivity rate for influenza in sentinel surveillance is highest among children aged 5 to 14 years. A higher percentage of hospital admissions is seen among people aged 65 or older. Influenza 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 at the regional level.