

## INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026 (Week 51, up to 21.12.2025)

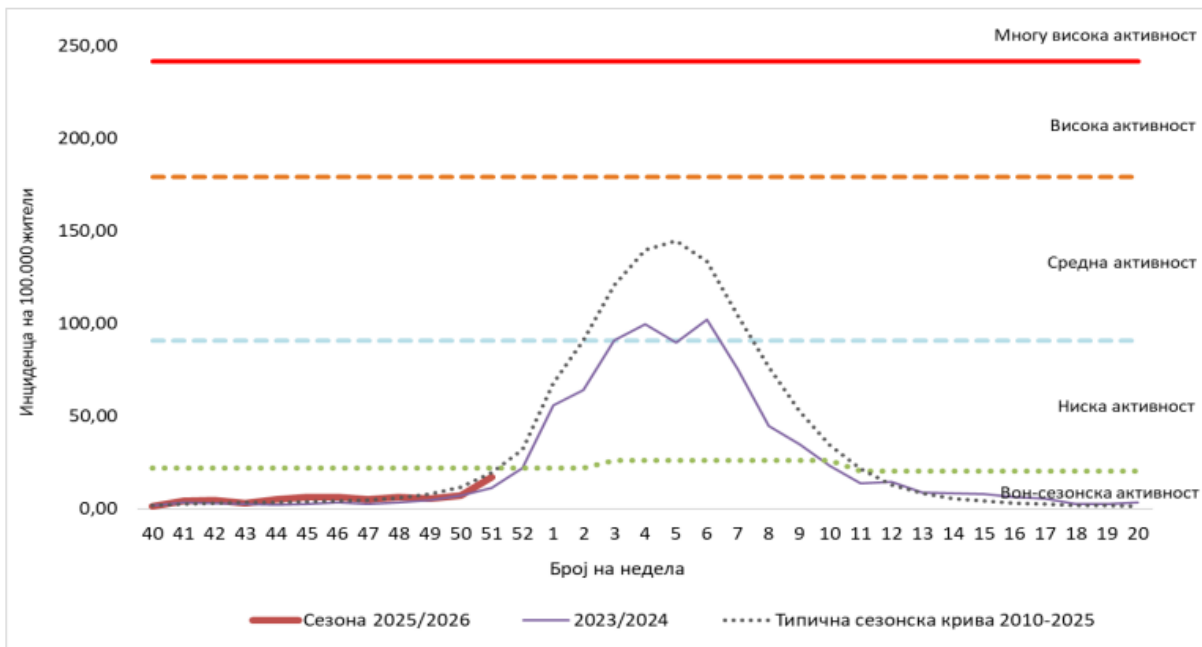
### Weekly data

During the 51st week of 2025 (December 15-21, 2025), a total of 314 ( $I=7.6/100,000$ ) cases of group reports of influenza/flu-like illnesses were registered in the Republic of North Macedonia, which is 2.3 times more compared to the previous week ( $n=134$ ).

The number of reported cases this week, compared to the 51st week of the previous season ( $n=139$ ), has increased by 2.3 times, while compared to the number for the 51st week of the typical epidemic curve (modeled from the last 15 seasons) ( $n=362$ ), it has decreased by 13.3% (Graph 1).

The reported incidence is below the weekly threshold for seasonal influenza virus activity ( $I=22.03/100,000$ ), meaning the threshold for entering the flu season has not yet been reached (Graph 1).

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

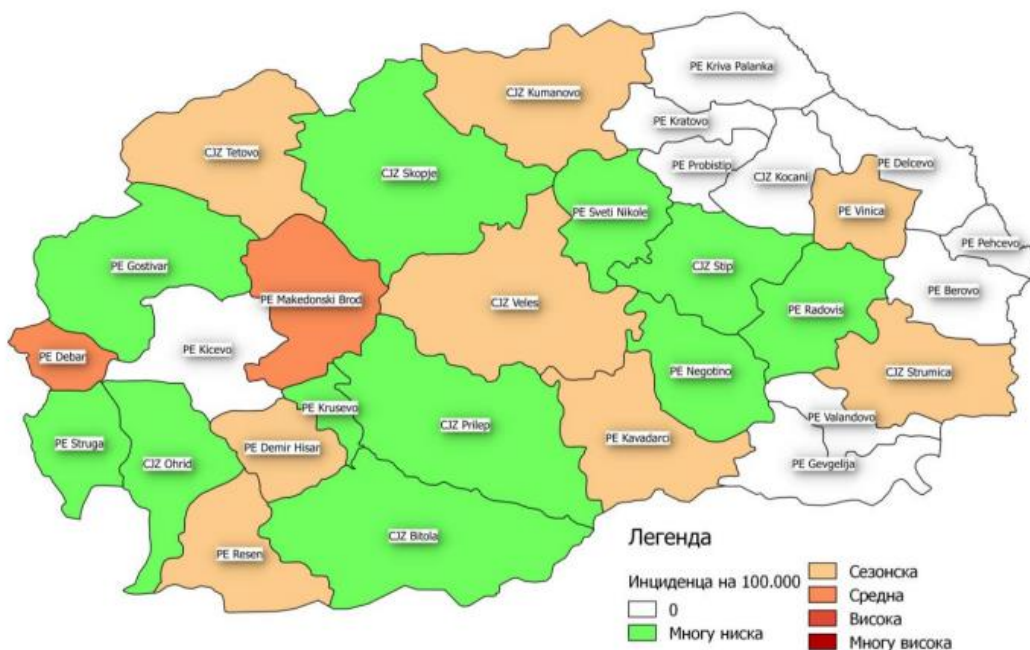


Regarding the age distribution, 190 cases were reported among individuals aged 15-64 years, 65 among children aged 5-14 years, 42 among children aged 0-4 years, and 17 among individuals aged 65 and older. The highest incidence (43.5/100,000) was recorded among children aged 0-4 years.

The reported cases came from 21 PHI/RU, with the following distribution: Tetovo – 65, Skopje – 63, Kumanovo – 39, Veles – 30, Debar – 23, Strumica – 18, Macedonian Brod – 11, and in Prilep, Kavadarci, Gostivar, Resen, Shtip, Ohrid, Struga, Vinica, Demir Hisar, Radovish, Bitola, Negotino, Sveti Nikole, and Krushevo, the number of cases is  $\leq 10$ .

In 11 reporting units that reported cases during this week, a very low activity level of the flu virus was registered in 8, while 2 units (Debar, Makedonski Brod) reported medium activity (Cartogram 1).

Cartogram 1. Influenza activity levels based on incidence per 100,000 inhabitants, 51st week of 2025.



## Virological Surveillance

During the 51st reporting week, the virological laboratory of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) of the Republic of North Macedonia received 28 samples from the routine and SARI (Severe Acute Respiratory Illness) surveillance for laboratory testing, which were tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

Out of the total tested samples, 5 positive cases of influenza were detected: two Influenza A(H3), two Influenza A(H1)pdm, and one non-subtyped Influenza A. Additionally, two cases of RSV (RSV type A) were detected. No SARS-CoV-2 positive cases were confirmed.

## Epidemiological Surveillance - Cumulative Data

For the 2025/2026 season, the total number of cases of influenza/flu-like illnesses is 1,329 ( $I=72.4/100,000$ ).

Compared to the same period last season (n=799), the number of reported cases has increased by 66.3%, while compared to the model from the last 15 seasons (n=1,342), a decrease of 0.9% is observed.

Cumulatively, the reported cases come from twenty-three public health centers (PHCs). The highest number of cases (n=283) is reported in the territory of Kumanovo, while the highest cumulative incidence (692.3/100,000) is reported in the territory of Makedonski Brod (n=70) (Table 1 in the Annex).

Regarding the distribution of cases by age group, the highest number of cases is reported in the age group covering the largest part of the population (15-64 years) - 956 cases (71.9%), where the highest incidence (79.0/100,000) is also recorded (Table 1 in the Annex).

#### **Distribution of cases of seasonal influenza/flu-like illnesses by months (Table 1 in the Annex):**

- October – 338 cases or 25.4%
- November – 438 cases or 33.0%
- December (up to 21.12.2025) – 553 cases or 41.6%

So far in the flu season, no deaths associated with influenza have been reported.

#### **Virological Surveillance - Cumulative Data**

Since the beginning of the 2025/2026 season, up to the 51st week, the virological laboratory of IPH has received 293 samples from healthcare institutions - from ambulatory and hospitalized patients for testing the presence of the influenza virus through routine surveillance. All samples were tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

Out of the total tested samples, 12 positive results for influenza were registered: 6 Influenza A(H3), 5 Influenza A(H1)pdm09, and one non-subtyped Influenza A. Additionally, 5 positive results for SARS-CoV-2 and 8 positive results for RSV (non-subtyped RSV – 1, RSV-A – 2, and RSV-B – 5) were detected.

#### **Epidemiological Comment**

An increase in the number and incidence of flu-like illnesses is observed on a weekly basis, but it remains within off-seasonal activity levels. Although laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza continue to be registered weekly, the positivity rate remains below 10%. According to these data, influenza activity shows regional variability and low intensity of circulation.

#### **General Preventive Measures**

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

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

- Avoid gathering and staying in rooms where many people are present, 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 living spaces warm and ventilate them often.
- It is recommended to wear warm, layered clothing and take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (teas and soups), freshly squeezed fruit juices, and water with lemon.
- Eat fresh products rich in vitamins and minerals, preferably fruits and vegetables, especially products rich in vitamin C (lemons, oranges).
- Practice a healthy lifestyle and habits, including good sleep and rest, healthy food, physical and mental activity, and stress reduction.

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 may still catch the flu or a flu-like illness.

### **What to do if you get the flu:**

Follow these recommendations:

- Stay home and avoid going 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, dispose of it in the trash.
- Wear a protective mask when interacting with family members 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.
- Ventilate the room where you are staying while sick.
- Keep your environment clean—items and surfaces—with household hygiene products.
- If you are over 65 or have chronic illnesses, or if your symptoms worsen or last for several days, seek medical help.

### **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 so-called risk groups (according to WHO recommendations):

- Elderly people (over 65 years)
- Children aged 6-59 months
- People over 6 months old 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 carried out at Public Health Centers (PHCs) and/or Health Homes. Vaccination for healthcare workers in Skopje is done at the Institute for Public Health.

According to the data from the Electronic Health Administration, as of the closure of this report, a total of 77,072 people from the risk groups have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

An additional 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines have been purchased by the Public Health Centers for the remaining population not falling under the above categories. These can be obtained for a certain financial contribution, and vaccination is carried out in Public Health Centers with their branches.

According to the data from the Electronic Health Administration, a total of 1,805 people have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

As of the 51st week, a total of 78,877 people 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 50th week of 2025 regarding the influenza activity in the WHO European Region:

- Rates of flu-like illnesses (ILI) and/or acute respiratory infections (ARI) have increased above baseline levels in 24 out of 32 countries in the WHO European Region.
- All indicators of influenza activity continue to rise across the European region, with most countries reporting increased intensity, a higher number of detections, and a higher positivity rate. The positivity rate for influenza in sentinel surveillance is highest among children aged 5-14 years. Hospital admissions due to influenza continue to increase, with the largest share of cases among people aged 65 and 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 increase at the regional level, with the highest share among children under 5 years old.