

## INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026 (Week 9, up to 23.02.2026–01.03.2026)

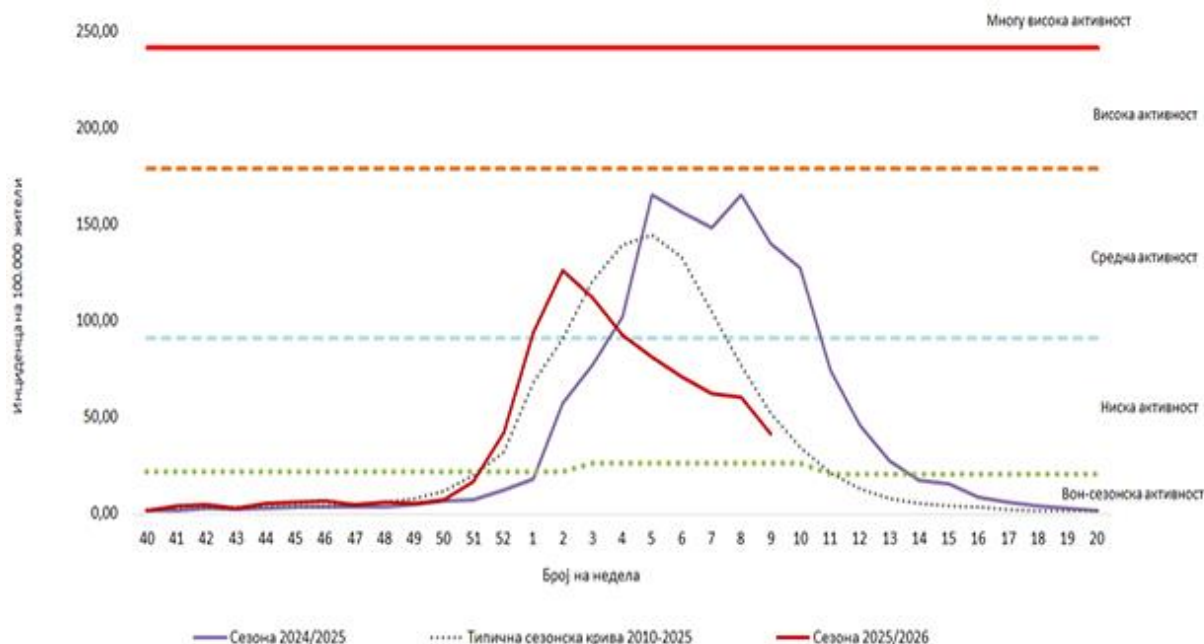
### Weekly Data

During the ninth week of 2026 (23.02–01.03.2026), 767 cases ( $I = 41.7/100,000$ ) of influenza / influenza-like illness (ILI) were reported in North Macedonia. This represents 31.1% fewer cases compared with the previous week ( $n = 1,113$ ).

Compared with the ninth week of the previous season ( $n = 2,569$ ), the number of reported cases decreased by 70.1%. Compared with the expected epidemic curve for week 9 (modeled from the last 15 seasons) ( $n = 963$ ), the number is 20.4% lower. (Graph 1)

During week 9, the recorded incidence corresponds to a low level of activity. (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, 430 cases were reported among individuals aged 15–64 years, 110 cases among children aged 5–14 years, 104 cases among children aged 0–4 years, and 123 cases among persons aged over 65 years.

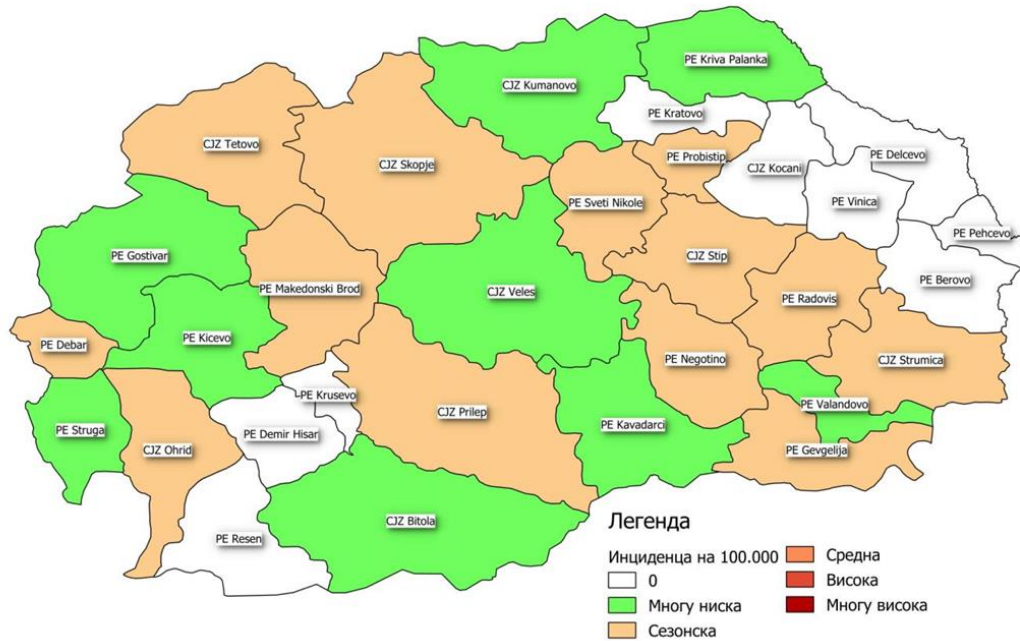
The highest incidence rate (107.7 per 100,000 population) was registered among children aged 0–4 years.

Cases were reported from 22 Centers for Public Health / Regional Units: Skopje – 447, Prilep – 45, Tetovo – 45, Strumica – 39, Shtip – 30. In Gevgelija, Ohrid, Kumanovo, Debar, Struga, Sveti Nikole, Gostivar, Radovish, Probishtip, Kichevo, Bitola, Kavadarci, Negotino, Makedonski Brod, Veles, Kriva Palanka, and Valandovo, the number of cases is below 30.

In Demir Hisar, Resen, Kochani, Berovo, Vinica, Delchevo, Pehchevo, Kratovo, and Krushevo, no cases of influenza or influenza-like illness were reported.

In 13 public health units, seasonal activity was recorded, while in 9 units very low influenza activity was registered. (Cartogram 1)

Cartogram 1. Influenza activity level according to incidence per 100,000 inhabitants, week 9 of 2026.



### Virological Surveillance

During the ninth reporting week of 2026, 72 specimens from routine and SARI 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.

From the total tested samples, 4 positive influenza cases were detected:

2 cases – Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09

1 case – Influenza A(H3)

1 case – Influenza A (not subtyped)

Additionally are detected 22 RSV cases (16 RSV type B and 6 RSV type A) and 6 positive results for SARS-CoV-2

### Epidemiological Surveillance – Cumulative Data

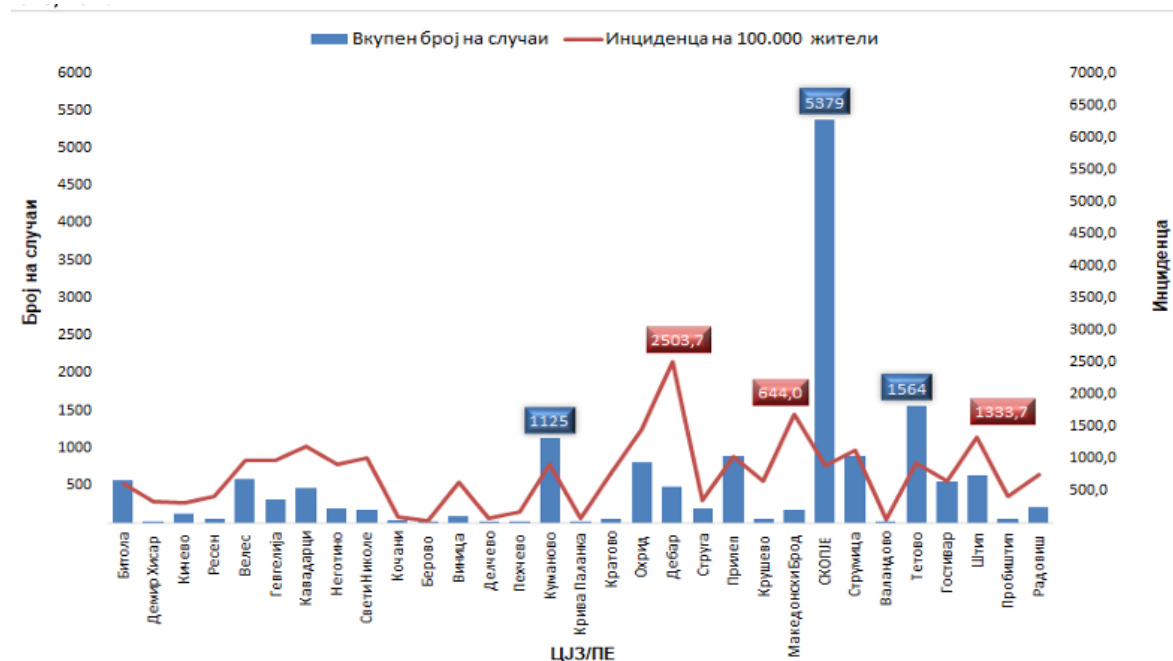
In the 2025/2026 season, the total number of influenza / influenza-like illness cases is 15,751 (I = 857.6/100,000).

Compared with the same period of the previous season (n = 19,944), the number of reported cases decreased by 21.0%. Compared with the model from the last 15 seasons (n = 19,017), there is a 17.2% decrease.

Cumulatively, cases have been reported from all Centers for Public Health / Regional Units. The largest number of cases (n = 5,379) was registered in Skopje. The highest cumulative incidence (I = 2,503.7/100,000) was registered in Debar (n = 479). (Table 1 in the Appendix)

Regarding age distribution, the largest number of cases is reported in the 15–64 age group – 9,094 cases (57.7%). The highest incidence (1,931.2/100,000) is registered in the 0–4 age group, followed by 5–14 years (1,271.7/100,000). (Graph 2, Table 1 in the Appendix)

Graph 2. Distribution of seasonal influenza cases by Centers for Public Health / Regional Units and incidence per 100,000 inhabitants, season 2025/2026.



Distribution of Seasonal Influenza / Influenza-Like Illness cases by month (Table 1 in the Appendix)

October – 338 cases or 2.1%

November – 438 cases or 2.8%

December – 1,324 cases or 8.4%

January – 9,315 cases or 59.1%

February – 4,336 cases or 27.5%

During the influenza season, four deaths associated with influenza were recorded.

Virological Surveillance – Cumulative Data

Since the beginning of the 2025/2026 influenza season, up to week 9/2026, the Virology Laboratory at the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of North Macedonia has received 949 samples from routine and sentinel SARI surveillance.

All received samples were tested for the presence of influenza virus, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

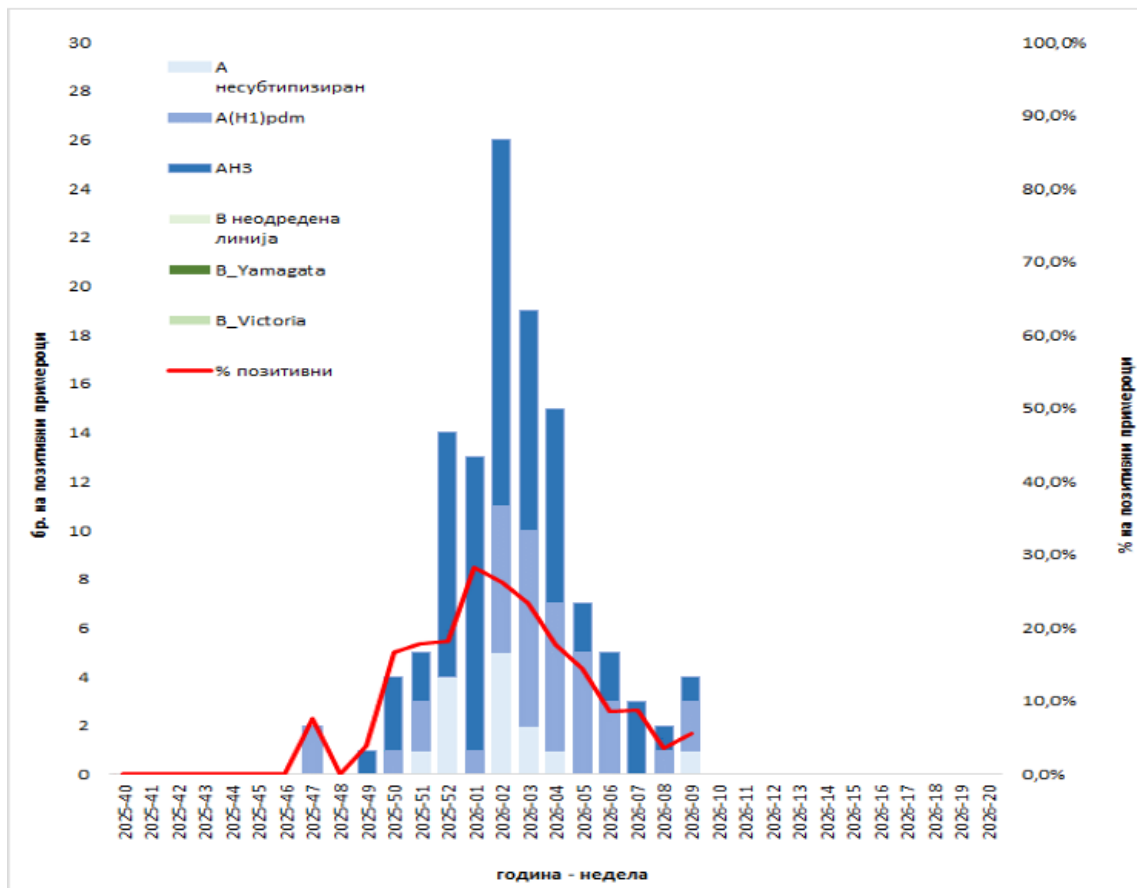
120 positive influenza cases were detected:

- Influenza A – 120
  - Influenza A(H1)pdm09 – 37 (30.8%)
  - Influenza A(H3) – 69 (57.5%)
  - Influenza A – not subtyped – 14 (11.7%)
- Influenza B – 0

Additionally, 19 positive cases of SARS-CoV-2 were registered. 102 positive cases of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) were registered (RSV not subtyped – 4, RSV-A – 20, RSV-B – 78)

Furthermore, five other respiratory viruses were detected among the tested samples.

Graph 3. Weekly distribution of the number and percentage of positive influenza samples, routine and sentinel surveillance, Republic of North Macedonia, 2025/2026.



### Epidemiological Commentary

During the ninth week of 2026, the trend of decreasing number of cases and incidence of influenza-like illnesses at the weekly level continues. The reported weekly incidence remains within the low activity range.

Results obtained from virological influenza surveillance indicate regional geographical activity of the influenza virus. The positivity rate is below the 10% threshold.

According to these data, North Macedonia currently has a low intensity of influenza virus circulation.

### General Prevention Measures

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

General protective measures against influenza are aimed at all acute respiratory diseases and can be very useful, especially if applied throughout the entire winter period:

- Avoid gatherings and staying in rooms with many people, especially avoid close contact with individuals who are sick or suspected to be sick (coughing, sneezing, fever).
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use disinfectant.
- Heat and ventilate indoor spaces regularly.
- Dress warmly in layers and take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (teas and soups), fresh fruit juices, and water with lemon.
- Consume fresh foods rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruit and vegetables necessary for the body. Foods rich in vitamin C (citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges) are particularly recommended.
- If fresh foods are not always available, multivitamin drinks or supplements may also be used.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle and habits, including adequate sleep and rest, healthy nutrition, physical and mental activity, and stress reduction.

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 can still become infected with influenza.

### What to Do if You Get the Flu

Follow these recommendations:

- Stay at home and do not go to work, school, or crowded places.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids and eat light meals.
- 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 and dispose of it afterward.
- Wear a protective mask when interacting with family members at home.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Use alcohol-based wet wipes or hand disinfectants.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands.
- Ventilate the room frequently where you stay while ill.
- Keep your surroundings clean by disinfecting objects and surfaces.
- If you are over 65 years old, have chronic diseases, or if symptoms worsen or persist for several days, seek medical assistance.

### 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 risk groups (according to WHO recommendations):

- Older adults (over 65 years)
- Children aged 6–59 months
- People 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 influenza vaccine, intended for priority population groups.

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

According to data from the Electronic Health Administration, from the start of vaccination until the closing of this report: 77,280 people from risk groups have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

Additionally, 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines were procured by the Public Health Centers for the rest of the population not belonging to the priority groups. These vaccines are available for a fee and administered at Public Health Centers and their regional units.

According to the Electronic Health Administration, 1,839 people were vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

By the eighth week, a total of 79,119 people in North Macedonia had been vaccinated with free or commercial influenza vaccines.

European Region

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

According to the ERVISS report published for week 8 of 2026 on influenza virus activity across the WHO European Region:

- Influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or acute respiratory infection (ARI) rates are above baseline levels in 15 of 32 countries and areas reporting data this week.
- Regional influenza indicators in both primary and secondary healthcare continue to decline from the elevated levels earlier in the season, with clear decreases observed in nearly all countries.
- Influenza A(H3) remains the dominant circulating virus across the Region, and adults aged 65+ account for the largest proportion of severe influenza cases.
- Regional indicators for SARS-CoV-2 activity remain at baseline levels.
- RSV activity indicators are stabilizing in primary healthcare settings but continue to increase in secondary healthcare facilities. There is significant variability between countries regarding the stage of their seasonal RSV epidemics.
- The disease burden and positivity rate remain highest among children under 5 years of age.