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First flu cases of the season reported in New Mexico

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) announced the start of the 2023-2024 flu season as the DOH [Scientific Laboratory Division](#) confirms the first two flu infections in the state – one each in northern and southern New Mexico.

“The geographical spread of these flu cases serves as an early indicator that we are likely to see more flu cases across the state in the upcoming weeks and months” said Department of Health Secretary **Patrick Allen**. “The best time possible to get your annual flu vaccination is now, especially while overall flu rates in New Mexico and the United States remain relatively low. We also encourage individuals get the new COVID-19 vaccine as well.”

Emergency Department visits related to COVID-19 and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) are also low in New Mexico, but in the case of COVID-19, the majority requiring hospitalization in the state and nationwide are people ages 65 and over.

The DOH advises clinicians to test patients for both flu and COVID-19. Both are respiratory viruses and people can have both at the same time. Testing only for flu does not eliminate the possibility a patient may also have COVID-19 nor does just COVID-19 testing exclude the chances of also having the flu.

“The newest flu and COVID shots don’t guarantee you won’t get sick--but both vaccines can reduce how sick you get,” said DOH deputy secretary **Laura Parajon M.D.** “The severity of the symptoms is everything when it comes to the difference between just not feeling well to needing to seek out additional treatment, even hospitalization.”

Flu vaccines are updated every year, which is why the New Mexico Department of Health recommends yearly vaccinations for everyone six months of age and older each flu season - running from October to May - especially people in the following groups who are at high risk or live with and care for people at high risk for developing serious flu-related complications, such as hospitalization and death:

- Children younger than 5 years old, but especially children younger than 2 years old.
- Pregnant individuals (any trimester, and up to two weeks post-partum).

- People aged 50 and older.
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, lung or heart disease, and those who are immunocompromised.
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for anyone at high risk for complications from flu, including healthcare personnel and caregivers of babies younger than six months.
- People who are morbidly obese.

To find flu, COVID-19 or RSV vaccinations in your area visit: vaccinenm.org.

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