INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026 *(Eighteenth week, up to 03.05.2026)*

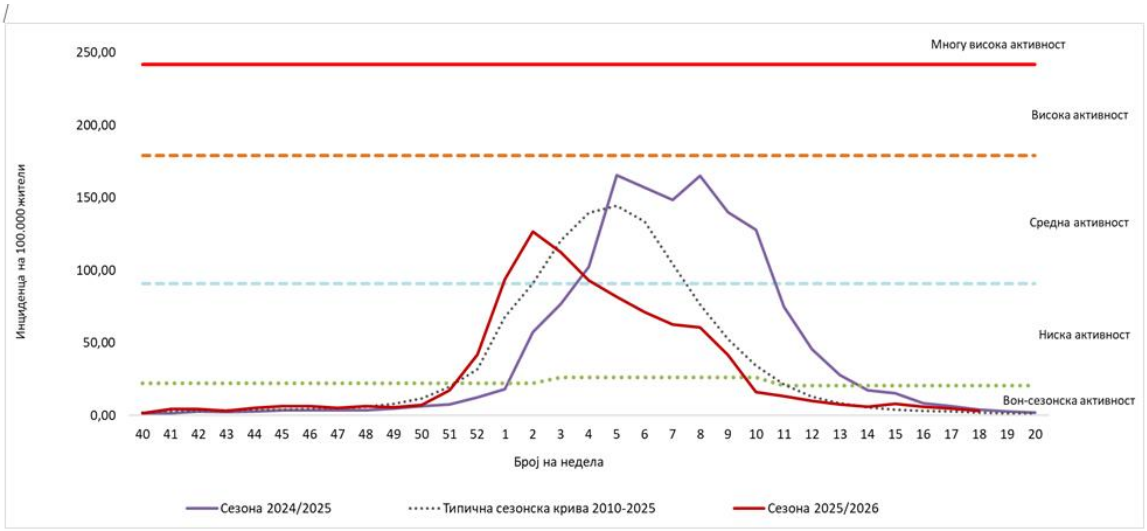
Weekly Data

During the 18th week of 2026 (27.04–03.05.2026), 55 cases (I=3.0/100,000) of grouped reports of influenza/influenza-like illnesses were reported in Macedonia, which is 37.5% fewer compared to the previous week (n=88).

The number of reported cases this week, compared to the 18th week of the previous season (n=73), decreased by 24.7%, while compared to the number for the 18th week of the typical epidemic curve (modeled from the last 15 seasons) (n=35), it increased by 58.7%. (Figure 1)

During the 18th week, the registered incidence was within the range of off-season activity (Figure 1).

Figure 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, 39 individuals were aged 15–64 years, while in the remaining age groups the number of cases was ≤10. The highest incidence (7.3/100,000) was registered among children aged 0–4 years.

The affected individuals were reported from 7 Centers for Public Health/Regional Units: Prilep – 24, Skopje – 13, while in Tetovo, Shtip, Radovish, Ohrid, and Makedonski Brod the number of cases was ≤10. In the remaining CPH/PHUs, no cases of influenza or influenza-like illnesses were reported.

VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE

During the 18th reporting week of 2026, 35 samples 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.

Out of the total tested samples, no positive influenza cases were detected.

Additionally, one case of SARS-CoV-2 was detected.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative Data

In the 2025/2026 season, the total number of influenza/influenza-like illness cases amounts to 17,119 (I=932.0/100,000).

Compared to the same period of the previous season (n=25,955), the number of reported cases decreased by 34.0%, while compared to the model based on the last 15 seasons (n=20,754), it decreased by 17.5%.

Cumulatively, cases were reported from all CPH/PHUs. The highest number of cases (n=5,582) was registered in the territory of Skopje, while the highest cumulative incidence (I=2,754.5/100,000) was registered in the territory of Debar (n=527). (Table 1 in the Appendix)

Regarding the distribution of cases by age groups, the largest number of cases was reported in the age group covering the majority of the population (15–64 years) – 9,963 cases (58.2%), while the highest incidence (2,070.0/100,000) was registered in the 0–4 years age group, followed by the 5–14 years age group (1,345.3/100,000). (Table 1 in the Appendix)

The distribution of influenza/influenza-like illness cases by month (Table 1 in the Appendix) shows that the majority of cases were reported in January – 9,315 cases or 54.9%.

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

VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative Data

Since the beginning of the 2025/2026 season, up to and including week 18/2026, a total of 1,336 samples from routine and sentinel SARI surveillance were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of North Macedonia. All received samples were tested for the presence of influenza virus, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

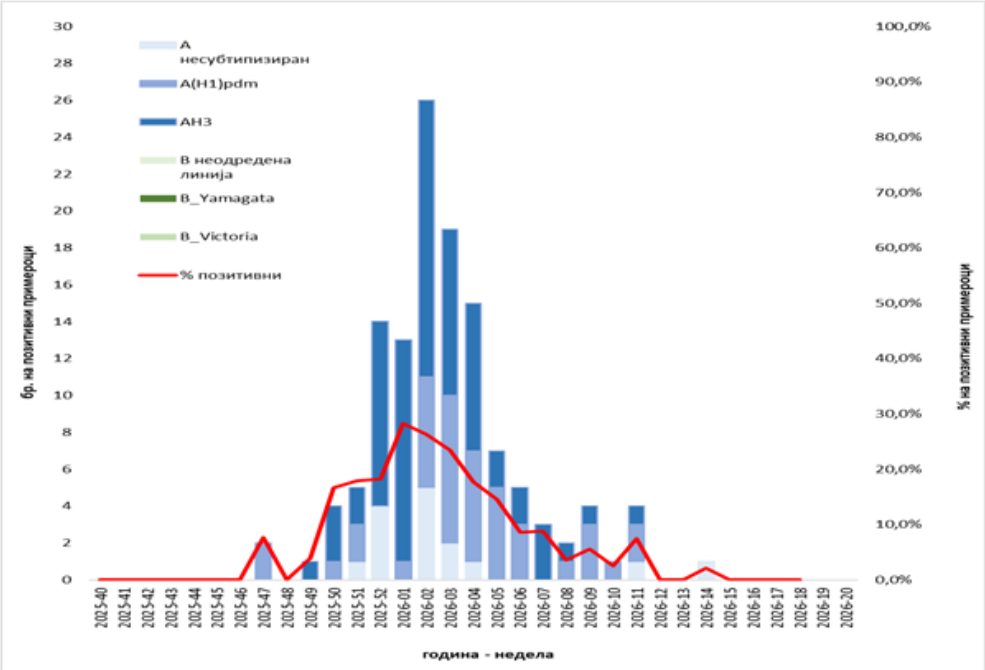
A total of 126 positive influenza cases were detected:

- Influenza A – 126
- Influenza A(H1)pdm09 – 41 (32.5%)
- Influenza A(H3) – 70 (55.6%)
- Influenza A – unsubtyped – 15 (11.9%)
- Influenza B – 0

A total of 28 positive SARS-CoV-2 cases were registered. Additionally, 161 positive cases of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) were registered (RSV unsubtyped – 5, RSV-A – 46, and RSV-B – 110).

Furthermore, 5 other respiratory viruses were detected among the tested samples.

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



EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

The reported weekly incidence is within the range of off-season activity. The results obtained from virological influenza surveillance show that there is no influenza virus activity. The positivity rate has remained below the 10% threshold for thirteen consecutive weeks.

According to these data, North Macedonia is experiencing a low intensity of influenza virus activity.

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 the so-called risk groups (according to WHO recommendations): older adults (over 65 years), children aged 6–59 months, persons older than 6 months with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and healthcare workers.

- For the 2025/2026 season, the Ministry of Health provided free quadrivalent vaccines in a total quantity of 80,000 doses, intended for priority population groups.
  According to data from the Administration for Electronic Health, a total of 77,281 individuals from at-risk population groups were vaccinated with free vaccines.
- An additional 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines were procured by the Public Health Centers for the remaining population not included in the above-mentioned groups.
  According to data from the Administration for Electronic Health, a total of 1,843 individuals were vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

Up to and including week 18, a total of 79,124 individuals in North Macedonia were vaccinated with either free or commercial vaccines.

EUROPEAN REGION

Source: ERVISS

According to the ERVISS report published for week 10 of 2026 on influenza virus activity across the WHO European Region:

- Influenza-like illness and/or acute respiratory infection rates were elevated above baseline levels in 2 out of 28 countries in the WHO European Region.
- Influenza virus circulation is at interseasonal levels.
- Regional indicators for SARS-CoV-2 activity remained at baseline levels.
- RSV circulation continues to steadily decline across all age groups throughout the region, although it remains elevated in a small number of countries. Children under 5 years of age continue to account for the greatest proportional burden of RSV.