

INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026

(Week 1, up to 04 January 2026)

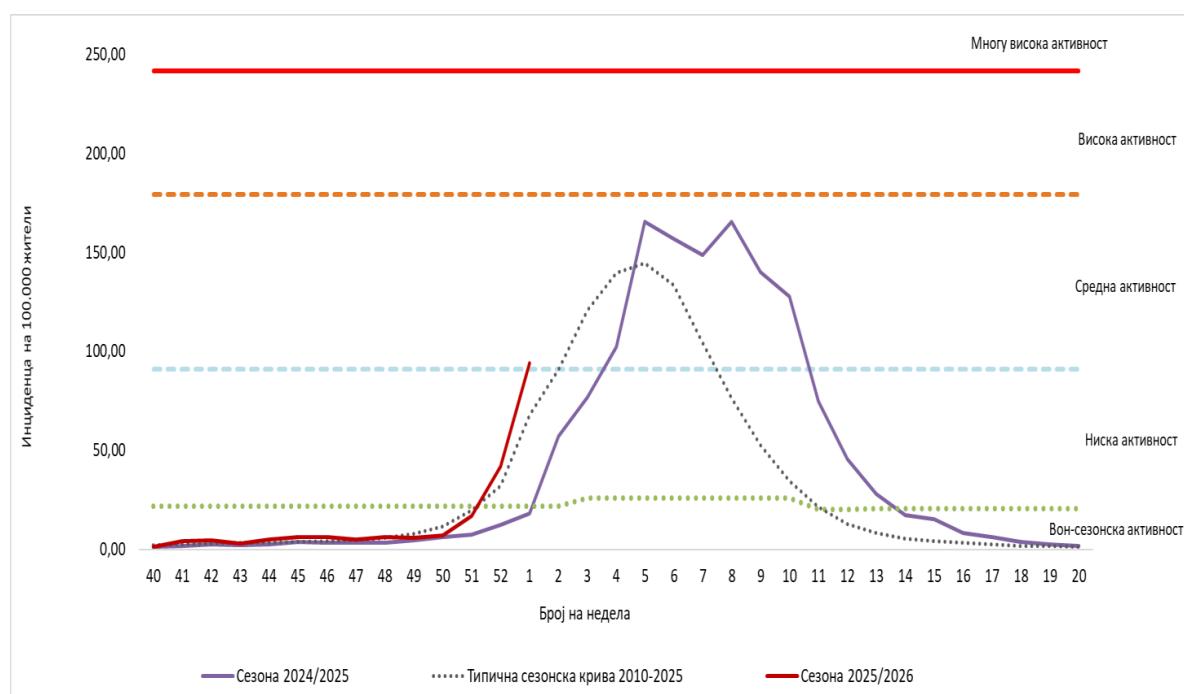
Weekly data

During the first week of 2026 (29 December 2025 – 4 January 2026), a total of 1,725 cases ($I = 93.9/100,000$) of reported influenza and influenza-like illness were registered in North Macedonia, representing a 2.2-fold increase compared to the previous week ($n = 771$).

Compared with the first week of the previous season ($n = 331$), the number of reported cases this week increased by 5.2 times, and compared with the number for the first week of the typical epidemic curve (modeled on the past 15 seasons) ($n = 1,244$), it increased by 38.7% (Figure 1).

After the threshold for the start of the influenza season ($22.03/100,000$) was exceeded during the previous week (week 52/2025), in the first week of 2026 the reported incidence remained above the weekly threshold for moderate influenza virus activity ($I = 92.52/100,000$) at the national level (Figure 1).

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

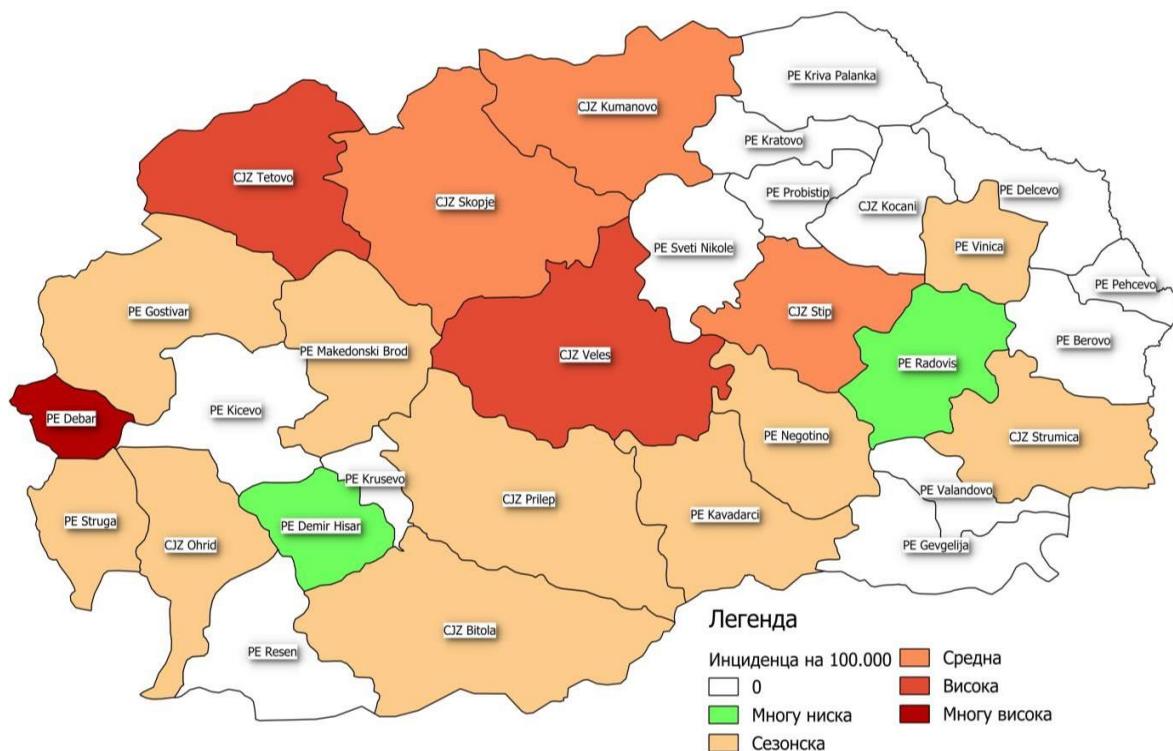


Regarding age distribution, 749 cases were reported among persons aged 15–64 years, 618 among children aged 5–14 years, 229 among children aged 0–4 years, and 129 among persons aged over 65 years. The highest incidence (287.7/100,000) was recorded among children aged 5–14 years.

Cases were reported from 18 PHC/RU: Skopje – 716, Tetovo – 339, Kumanovo – 150, Veles – 109, Shtip – 60, Debar – 54, Gostivar – 49, Prilep – 45, Ohrid – 44, Bitola – 40, Strumica – 38, while in Kavadarci, Negotino, Struga, Demir Hisar, Vinica, Makedonski Brod, and Radovish the number of cases was fewer than 30.

Very high influenza activity was noted in Debar; high activity in Veles and Tetovo; moderate activity in Skopje, Kumanovo, and Shtip; seasonal activity in 10 units; and very low influenza virus activity in two units (Radovish and Demir Hisar) (Map 1).

Map 1. Level of influenza activity by incidence per 100,000 population, week 1, 2026.



VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE

During the first reporting week of 2026, a total of 51 samples from routine and SARI surveillance were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) for laboratory testing. The specimens were tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

From the total number of tested samples, 13 influenza-positive cases were detected: 12 cases of Influenza A(H3) and one case of Influenza A(H1)pdm09.

In addition, four RSV cases were detected: one case of RSV type A and three cases of RSV type B. No SARS-CoV-2-positive cases were confirmed.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative Data

In the 2025/2026 season, the total number of influenza and influenza-like illness cases is 3,825 ($I = 208.3/100,000$).

Compared with the same period of the previous season ($n = 1,355$), the number of reported cases increased by 2.8 times, while compared with the model based on the past 15 seasons ($n = 3,173$), an increase of 20.6% was recorded.

Cumulatively, cases were reported from twenty-five PHC/RU. The highest number of cases ($n = 1,024$) was registered in the territory of Skopje, while the highest cumulative incidence ($I = 890.1/100,000$) was recorded in the territory of Makedonski Brod ($n = 90$) (Table 1 in the Annex).

Regarding age-group distribution, the highest number of cases was reported in the age group representing the largest population group (15–64 years), with 2,160 cases (56.5%), while the highest incidence (433.4/100,000) was recorded in the 5–14-year age group (Table 1 in the Annex).

Monthly distribution of seasonal influenza / influenza-like illness cases (Table 1 in the Annex):

- October – 338 cases (8.8%)
- November – 438 cases (11.5%)
- December – 1,324 cases (34.6%)
- January – 1,725 cases (45.1%)

During the current influenza season to date, no influenza-associated deaths have been reported.

VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative Data

From the beginning of the 2025/2026 season up to and including the first week of 2026, a total of 421 samples were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) from healthcare facilities. These specimens were collected from both outpatient and hospitalized patients as part of routine surveillance and tested for the presence of the influenza virus. All received specimens were tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, and/or RSV.

From the total number of tested specimens, 39 influenza-positive results were recorded, including 28 cases of Influenza A(H3), 6 cases of Influenza A(H1)pdm09, and 5 cases of Influenza A (not subtyped).

In addition, 5 SARS-CoV-2-positive results and 14 RSV-positive results were detected (RSV not subtyped – 1, RSV-A – 4, and RSV-B – 9).

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

A significant increase in the number and incidence of influenza-like illnesses at the weekly level has been noted. During the first week of 2026, moderate influenza activity at the national level was recorded for the first time in the season. Results from influenza virological surveillance indicate regional geographic activity of the influenza virus. The positivity rate has remained above the 10% threshold for four consecutive weeks.

Based on these data, a high intensity of influenza virus activity is present in North Macedonia, with expectations of further increases in activity in the coming period.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

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

General preventive measures against influenza apply to all acute respiratory infections are particularly beneficial if followed throughout the winter season:

- Avoid gatherings and staying in crowded indoor spaces, especially close contact with people who are ill (coughing, sneezing, fever).
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use hand disinfectants.
- Heat indoor spaces adequately and ventilate frequently.
- Wear warm, layered clothing; take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (tea, soups), freshly squeezed fruit juices, water with lemon.
- Consume fresh foods rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruits and vegetables. Foods rich in vitamin C (lemons, oranges, citrus fruits) are particularly recommended. If fresh food is not always available, multivitamin supplements may be used.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: good sleep and rest, healthy diet, physical and mental activity, stress reduction.

A strong immune system helps you stay healthy or cope more easily with influenza, but even healthy individuals can become ill.

What to do if you get influenza?

- Stay at home; do not go to work, school or crowded places.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids; eat light food.
- Avoid close contact with household members; do not receive visitors.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing; dispose of tissues properly.
- Wear a protective mask when in contact with household members.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Use alcohol-based wipes or hand disinfectants.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Ventilate rooms frequently.
- Keep your surroundings clean and disinfect surfaces.
- If you are over 65 years of age, have chronic diseases, or symptoms worsen or persist for several days, seek medical care.

INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Vaccination against seasonal influenza is the most effective protection. The Institute of Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, especially risk groups (according to WHO): people aged over 65, children aged 6–59 months, individuals over 6 months with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and healthcare workers.

For the 2025/2026 season, the Ministry of Health provided 80,000 free quadrivalent vaccine doses for priority groups. Vaccination began on 16 October 2025 and is carried out at Public Health Centers and Health Centers. Healthcare workers in Skopje are vaccinated at the Institute of Public Health.

According to data from the National e-Health Administration, 77119 persons from risk groups have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

An additional 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines have been procured by the Centers for Public Health for the rest of the population. These vaccines can be obtained for a specified fee, and vaccination is carried out at the Centers for Public Health and their Regional Units.

According to data from the Directorate for eHealth, a total of 1,812 persons have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

As of week 1, a total of 78931 people in North Macedonia have been vaccinated.

EUROPEAN REGION

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

According to the ERVISS report published for week 52 of 2025 on influenza virus activity across the WHO European Region:

- Rates of influenza-like illness and/or acute respiratory infections have increased above baseline levels in 13 of the 20 countries in the WHO European Region that reported data.
- Influenza activity indicators continued to rise across the European Region over the past two weeks. The percentage of positive influenza samples in sentinel surveillance is highest among children aged 5–14 years. Hospitalizations, intensive care unit admissions, and influenza-associated deaths are also continuing to increase at the regional level, with the highest share among persons aged 65 years and older. Influenza A(H3) remains the dominant circulating virus.
- Regional indicators of SARS-CoV-2 activity have decreased and are at baseline levels.
- RSV detections and positivity rates continue to increase at the regional level, with the highest share among children under 5 years of age.

Note: Delays in data collection and reporting in many countries due to the holiday period have affected the data presented in this weekly overview and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology
Institute of Public Health