

INFLUENZA SITUATION IN THE Republic of North Macedonia, SEASON 2025/2026 (Week 48, up to 30.11.2025)

WEEKLY DATA

Epidemiological Surveillance

During week 48 of 2025 (24–30 November 2025), in the Republic of North Macedonia, 114 influenza cases were reported ($I = 6.2/100,000$ population), based on group notifications of influenza/influenza-like illness (ILI), representing a 25.3% increase compared to the previous week ($n = 91$).

Compared to week 48 of the previous season, an increase of 75.4% was observed (65 cases registered), while compared to the model for the past 15 seasons ($n = 111$), an increase of 2.7% was recorded.

Cases this week were reported in 11 Centers for Public Health (CPH/Regional Units), specifically: Kumanovo – 49, Strumica – 16, Shtip – 11, Tetovo – 9, Gostivar – 7, Prilep and Kavadarci – 6 each, Makedonski Brod – 5, Negotino – 3, and Radovish and Skopje – 1 case each.

By age group:

- 15–64 years: 76 cases
- 5–14 years: 19 cases
- Over 65 years: 16 cases
- 0–4 years: 3 cases

The reported incidence remains below the weekly threshold for seasonal influenza activity ($I = 22.03/100,000$), meaning the threshold for entry into the influenza season has not yet been reached.

Virological Surveillance

During week 48, 13 samples from routine and SARI (Severe Acute Respiratory Infection) 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.

Of the total tested materials:

- No positive cases of Influenza or SARS-CoV-2 were detected.
- Within SARI surveillance, 4 samples were tested for RSV, with 1 RSV-B positive case detected.

CUMULATIVE DATA

Epidemiological Surveillance

In the 2025/2026 season, the total number of influenza/ILI cases is 776 ($I = 42.2/100,000$).

Compared to the same period last season (n = 454), the number of reported cases increased by 70.9%, while compared to the 15-season model (n = 662), an increase of 25.9% was registered.

Cumulatively, cases have been reported from 15 CPH/Regional Units. The highest number of cases was registered in Gostivar (n = 237), while the highest cumulative incidence (I = 306.6/100,000) was recorded in Makedonski Brod.

By age distribution, the largest number of cases was reported in the 15–64 age group – 584 cases (75.3%).

Virological Surveillance

Since the beginning of the 2025/26 season, 215 samples from routine and SARI surveillance have been received at the virology laboratory for testing (Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV).

Of the total tested samples:

- 5 positive for SARS-CoV-2
- 3 positive for RSV (1 untyped RSV and 2 RSV-B)
- 2 positive for Influenza – Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09

GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

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

General protection measures against influenza apply to all acute respiratory infections and are especially useful when implemented throughout the winter period:

- Avoid gatherings and crowded indoor spaces, especially close contact with individuals who are ill or suspected of being ill (coughing, sneezing, fever).
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use hand disinfectant.
- Keep indoor areas warm and ventilate frequently.
- Dress warmly in layers; take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (tea and soups), fresh fruit juices, and lemon water.
- Consume fresh foods rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruits and vegetables. Vitamin C-rich products (lemons, oranges, citrus fruits) are particularly recommended. If fresh food is not always available, multivitamin drinks and supplements may be used.
- Practice a healthy lifestyle, including adequate sleep and rest, healthy nutrition, maintaining physical and mental activity, and reducing stress.

A strong immune system will help you remain healthy or cope more easily with influenza and influenza-like illness. However, even healthy individuals with strong immunity can become ill.

What to Do If You Get the Flu

- Stay at home and do not go to work, school, or crowded places.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids; consume light meals.
- Avoid close contact with household members; do not receive visitors while ill.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of it properly.
- Wear a protective mask when in contact with household members if coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Use alcohol-based wet wipes or hand disinfectant.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Ventilate the room frequently.
- Maintain cleanliness of objects and surfaces in your surroundings.
- If you are over 65 years old, have chronic diseases, or if symptoms worsen or persist for several days, seek medical assistance.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

Weekly variation in the number and incidence of influenza-like illnesses is observed, but activity remains within off-season levels. Although the first influenza cases have been registered, the positivity rate remains below 10%. According to these data, influenza virus activity is still sporadic and of low intensity.

INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Seasonal influenza vaccination is the most effective protection against this disease. The Institute of Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, especially for high-risk groups (according to WHO recommendations):

- Elderly persons (over 65 years)
- Children aged 6–59 months
- Persons 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 vaccine for priority population groups.

Vaccination began on 16 October 2025 and is conducted in Centers for Public Health 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 e-Health Administration, from the start of vaccination until the closing of this report, 76,477 persons from risk categories have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

An additional 2,400 doses of commercial vaccines were procured by the Centers for Public Health for the general population not included in priority groups. These are available for a fee and administered at the Centers for Public Health and their Regional Units.

According to data from the e-Health Administration, 1,658 persons have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

In total, 78,105 persons in the Republic of North Macedonia have been vaccinated with either free or commercial vaccines.

EUROPEAN REGION

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

According to the ERVISS report published for week 47 of 2025:

The number of patients presenting to primary healthcare with respiratory symptoms remains at baseline or low levels in most countries. Although the influenza season started unusually early, circulation remains relatively low in most countries, but detections are rapidly increasing.

SARS-CoV-2 continues to circulate widely but is decreasing across all age groups. Circulation of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) remains low but is slowly increasing. The impact on hospitalizations remains limited at this stage.

This year's influenza season began three to four weeks earlier than in the previous two years, with more than half of countries now reporting activity above baseline. Influenza A is dominant in all countries, with A(H3N2) leading the increasing trend in recent weeks. Circulation is highest among children aged 5–14 years. Early increases in hospitalizations have been observed in some countries, affecting all age groups, but primarily those aged 65 years and older.

On 20 November 2025, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published a threat assessment report evaluating the risk of influenza for the EU/EEA in the context of increased circulation of the target clade K of A(H3N2).

RSV circulation trends are slowly increasing and are currently approximately one week later than last season. Increases are visible in both primary healthcare and hospital surveillance data from several countries, predominantly affecting children under five years of age.

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