

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 12/8/2023**TO: Grant Co. Healthcare & Grant Co.  
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## 2023/2024 Respiratory Virus Season Has Arrived in Grant County

*First influenza-associated death reported in a Grant County resident.*

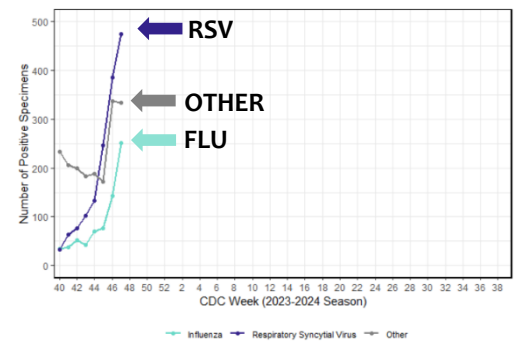
GRANT COUNTY, WA – The Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, has issued the following alert to notify the Grant County media and healthcare community that the 2023/2024 respiratory virus season has arrived in Grant County. The rates of influenza (flu) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) have been reliably increasing. COVID-19 virus presence in wastewater is also increasing globally and statewide.

In addition to increasing influenza reports, the Grant County Health District (GCHD) was recently notified of the first confirmed influenza-associated death in Grant County this season, which occurred in an individual with underlying health conditions. “We are deeply saddened to learn about losing a member of our community to flu,” states Dr. Alexander Brzezny, Grant County Health Officer. He adds, “We wish to express our most sincere condolences to the affected family.” Three other influenza-related deaths have been reported in the state so far this season. **Healthcare facilities should begin implementing their own “influenza season” policies or other respiratory virus safeguards without delay and according to their plans and populations they serve.**

## Common Respiratory Viruses, Washington, 2023-2024 Season to

**Date** The frequency of influenza-like illness (fever plus cough or sore throat) causing people to seek healthcare is increasing across most areas of the country. Separately, RSV has been the fastest-rising virus in Washington for several weeks, with influenza climbing more recently. It is not yet clear if COVID-19 will become seasonal, but rates have been higher each winter since the beginning of the pandemic.

Graph Source: [Washington State Influenza](#)



**Symptoms of influenza and other respiratory viruses** – Symptoms of influenza include a temperature greater than 100F WITH a cough and /or sore throat. Those with the flu may also get headaches, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, fatigue (tiredness), and may experience vomiting and/or diarrhea. Not every person with flu will have a fever. People who develop trouble breathing need to seek emergency care or contact their doctor immediately. Common symptoms for each of the major respiratory viruses can be [found here](#).

**Vaccinations** – **It is not too late to get your flu and COVID-19 shot.** GCHD urges all residents **6 months and older to get their flu shot as soon as possible.** People who haven't been vaccinated against these viruses still have time to get the vaccine before the season reaches its peak. Influenza strain A is currently the dominant strain in Washington. The flu vaccine is a good match against this strain of influenza.

**Children 6 months through 8 years of age need either 1 or 2 doses of influenza vaccine.**

- Children 6 months through 8 years getting vaccinated for the first time, or who have only previously received 1 dose of flu vaccine in the past, should get 2 doses this season. Talk with your healthcare provider or [click here](#) to learn more.
  - Children who only get 1 dose, but need 2 doses, are likely to have less or possibly no protection from that single dose.

COVID-19 and flu vaccines reduce the chances of having severe complications from infection. There are flu vaccines available in various locations, including health care provider offices and pharmacies. Find COVID and flu vaccine [here](#).

The [RSV vaccine](#) is recommended for people 60 years and older and women 32-36 weeks pregnant. Talk with your healthcare provider to learn more about the RSV vaccine.

**In Addition to Vaccinations** - GCHD encourages our community to wash your hands often, stay home if you are sick, and mask in crowded areas. If you or a family member are sick with a respiratory illness, stay home from school or work for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone--without the use of a fever-reducing medicine—and you feel better. Because the virus causing COVID-19 is considered airborne, additional COVID-19 isolation guidelines can be [found here](#).

- **Treatment** – Antivirals are prescription medicines that can fight flu and COVID-19 viruses. Antivirals must be prescribed to you by a healthcare provider. It is very important that antiviral drugs are started as soon as possible to treat patients who are at [higher risk of serious complications or very sick with the flu](#). If your doctor prescribes antiviral medication, finish the entire prescription.

**Resources -**

[Grant County Respiratory Viruses: Seasonal Trends](#)

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