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TO: Grant Co. Media

FOR INFORMATION CONTACTLexi Smith
Communication Coordinator
509-766-7960 EXT. 31
lsmith@granthealth.org

2023-2024 Respiratory Virus Season Update

Community update on trends, outbreaks and investigations.

GRANT COUNTY, WA – The Grant County Health District (GCHD) continues to monitor the 2023-2024 respiratory virus season trends.

Thus far, GCHD has investigated two confirmed influenza-associated deaths and three confirmed COVID-19-associated deaths this season. At the end of January, Grant County experienced an increase in COVID-19-related hospitalizations. Between January 21st and January 27th, COVID-19 accounted for 4.7% of hospitalizations in Grant County. In addition, GCHD has investigated several COVID-19 and influenza outbreaks and continues to monitor respiratory illness activity within healthcare and long-term care facilities.

As the respiratory virus season continues, GCHD encourages everyone to continue taking the following precautions to lower the chance of getting yourself and others sick:

- Avoid visiting healthcare facilities, especially long-term care (LTC) facilities or vulnerable individuals if you are experiencing any respiratory symptoms. GCHD strongly recommends anyone visiting an LTC facility wear the most protective mask that also fits well. LTC and hospital residents are among the populations most vulnerable to respiratory viruses.
- Wear a mask while visiting your healthcare providers. Masks should also be worn in patient areas to help protect each other.
- If you have a known exposure to someone with COVID or flu, wear a mask and monitor for symptoms. If you are not feeling well, stay home and test as soon as possible.



- Continue wearing a mask around others until your symptoms have gone away.
- Check this website for information on isolating: [Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 | Washington State Department of Health](#)
- It is not too late to get the COVID, influenza and/or RSV vaccines if you are eligible and have not done so already. The vaccines are safe and reduce the rates of disease and complication from these most concerning viruses.
 - Find a location with vaccines near you: [Vaccines.gov - Search for flu vaccine locations](#)

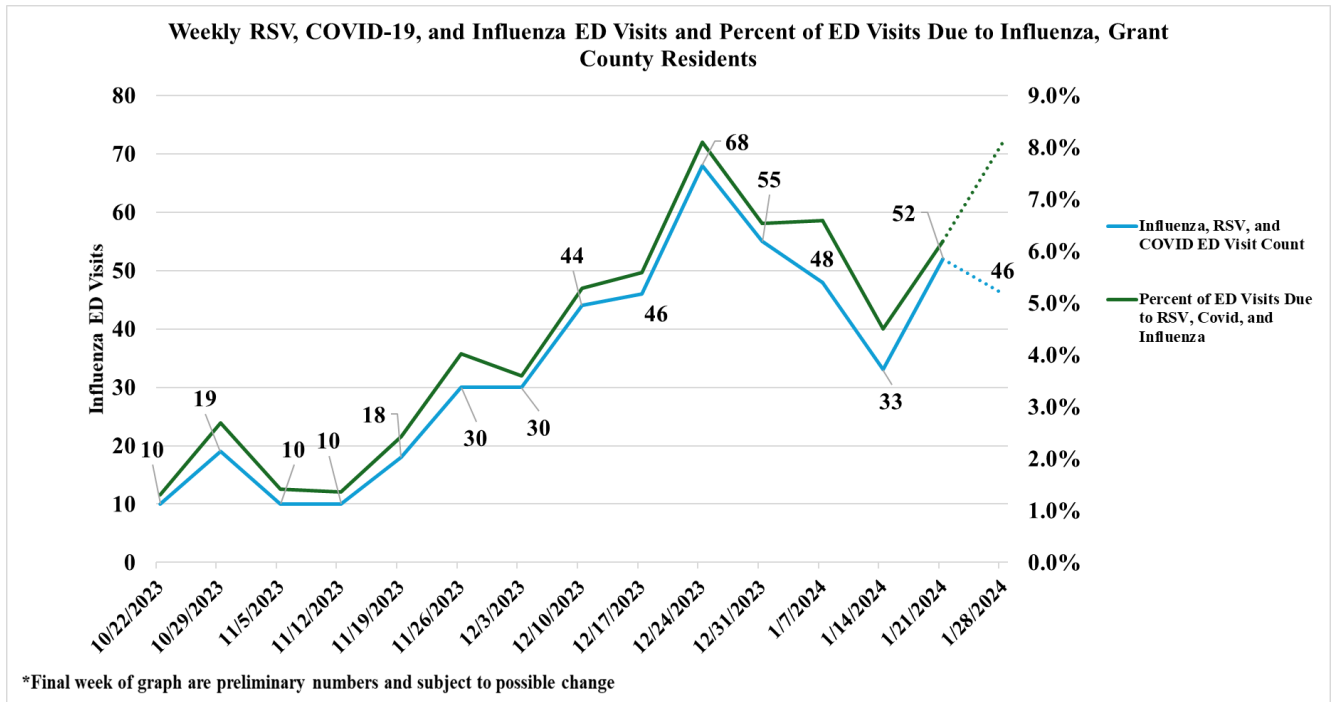
Positive COVID Test – If you tested positive for COVID-19, isolate for at least 5 days after your symptoms first appeared. You can leave isolation after 5 full days if:

- Your symptoms are improving, and
- You have not had a fever for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication.

You should continue to wear the most protective mask you can that fits well and that you will wear consistently. Also wear your mask when around others at home and in public for 5 additional days (day 6 through day 10) after the end of your 5-day isolation period.

Grant County Respiratory Virus Surveillance – Grant County experienced a surge of respiratory viruses from mid to late December. Cases continue to fluctuate, not yet reaching a plateau for the 2023-2024 respiratory virus season. While influenza and RSV trends have continued to decrease more quickly during January, COVID-19 activity has remained relatively higher, declining only slightly. Influenza A remains the dominant influenza strain in Grant County thus far. However, we have been experiencing a recent uptick in Influenza B cases. JN.5 strain of COVID-19 Omicron family is now responsible for a majority of COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and likely in our area.

The graph below shows a representation of combined total weekly cases of Grant County residents of RSV, Covid-19, and influenza that have tested positive in the Emergency Department within the region. Not all cases are being reported. The most recent week is a dotted line due to incomplete and pending data and should be interpreted cautiously. See data limitations in the paragraph below.



The data presented in these graphs is sourced from the Rapid Health Information Network (RHINO) program, which collects, maintains, and disseminates syndromic surveillance data for Washington. RHINO serves as the primary outlet for outpatient data and one of the two sources for emergency department data. The RHINO syndromic surveillance operates as a near real-time, all-hazards system crucial for monitoring and evaluating various public health issues, including communicable diseases. It is important to note that this data should be utilized as a component of disease-specific surveillance rather than as the sole information source; limitations of this data source include the lack of complete data updates within the last two weeks and the inclusion of only those individuals who sought healthcare, making it an incomplete data source for everyone affected by the targeted illness or disease in our community.

For more information – Stay up to date with respiratory virus trends in Grant County. GCHD’s [‘Respiratory Viruses: Season Updates’](#) webpage is updated weekly.