

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 2/9/2024**

TO: Grant Co. Healthcare

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

 Lexi Smith  
 Communication Coordinator  
 509-766-7960 EXT. 31  
 lsmith@granthealth.org

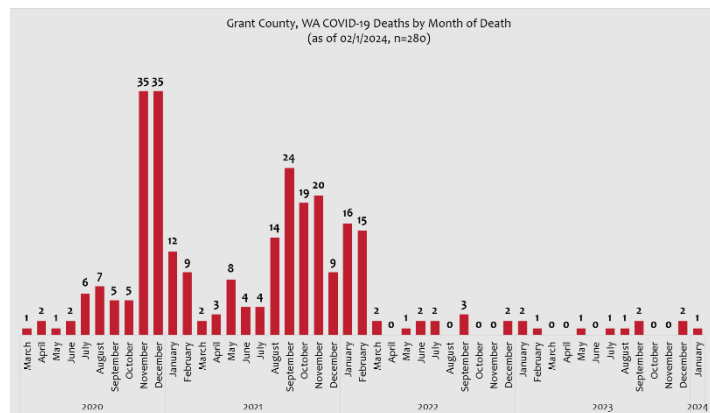
 Amber McCoy  
 Communicable Disease & Epi Facilitator  
 509-766-7960 EXT 14  
 amccoy@granthealth.org

## 2023-2024 Respiratory Virus Season Update

*Community update on trends, outbreaks, and investigations.*

GRANT COUNTY, WA – The Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, has issued the following alert to update the Grant County healthcare community on the 2023-2024 respiratory virus season.

To date, GCHD has investigated two confirmed influenza-associated deaths and three confirmed COVID-19-associated deaths this season thus far. 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.



GCHD recommends that patients and visitors of Grant County healthcare facilities wear masks to help protect providers and other patients. As in the past, we ask that healthcare providers take precautions to protect themselves by wearing N95 masks when treating or testing individuals with respiratory illness.



**COVID-19** – Anyone who is not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine should be vaccinated now. 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. JN.5 strain of COVID-19 Omicron family is now responsible for a great majority of COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and likely in our area.

Clinicians should consider COVID-19 antiviral treatment in all patients who test positive for COVID, regardless of symptoms, who have one or more risk factors for severe COVID-19. Treatment must be started as soon as possible, preferably within 5 days of symptom onset. The preferred treatments for eligible adult and pediatric patients over 12 years of age are ritonavir-boosted nirmatrelvir (Paxlovid) and remdesivir (Veklury).

**Influenza** - GCHD recommends influenza vaccination with an age-appropriate influenza vaccine for all people 6 months and older. Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit. Influenza A remains the dominant influenza strain in Grant County thus far. However, we have been experiencing a recent uptick in Influenza B cases.

Decisions about starting antiviral treatment for patients with suspected influenza do not require a laboratory confirmation of influenza virus infection. When suspected or confirmed, antiviral treatment should be started as soon as possible for those who are hospitalized, have a severe, complicated, or progressive illness, or are at higher risk for influenza complications. Antivirals are also appropriate for those who were exposed to influenza and have a high risk of complications, or during influenza outbreaks.

**Please report any influenza-related death or influenza amongst long-term care residents to GCHD - 509-766-7960.**

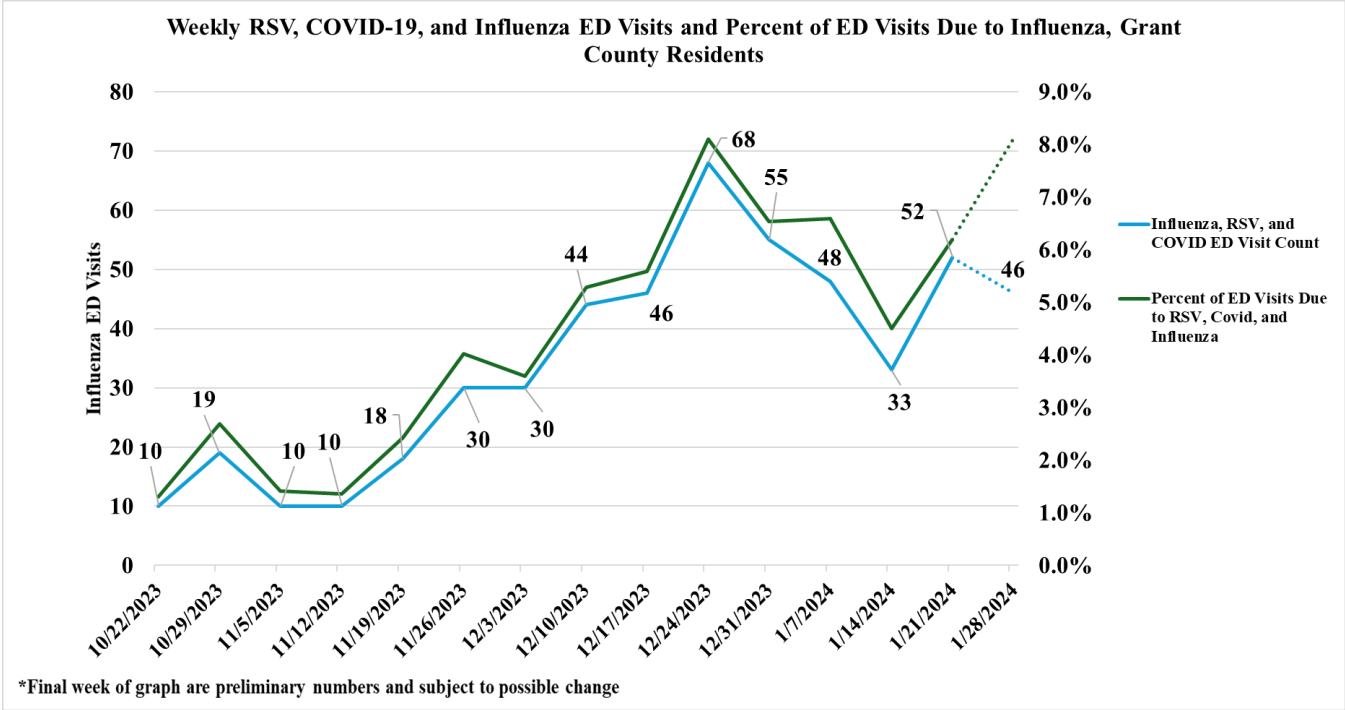
**RSV** - RSV immunizations are recommended only for the following groups:

- Adults ages 60 and older: Two RSV vaccines (Arexvy by GSK and Abrysvo by Pfizer) have been licensed by FDA and recommended by CDC for adults ages 60 and older, using shared clinical decision-making.
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- Pregnant women: One RSV vaccine (Abrysvo by Pfizer) has been licensed and recommended during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy to protect infants.
- Infants and some toddlers: An RSV preventive antibody /passive immunization has been licensed and recommended for infants and some toddlers through March.
  - More nirsevimab is expected to arrive within the next few weeks.

**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 slowly.

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 the graph above 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.

**GCHD Notification** – Effective next Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, GCHD will provide weekly updates to the Grant County healthcare community regarding respiratory virus trends in our area. This information as well as a monthly update on confirmed COVID deaths in Grant County are available on our website. [Respiratory Viruses: Seasonal Updates | Granthealth.org](https://www.granthealth.org/RespiratoryViruses/SeasonalUpdates).

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