



# Immunization Newsletter

## January 2025

### Respiratory Virus Season

Respiratory virus season activity is high or elevated in most of the country - and continues to change. Vaccination rates are concerningly [lower compared to previous years](#), with only 37% of children having received a flu shot, compared to 43% at this time last year. Given the [record number](#) of pediatric influenza-associated deaths last year, this is not good news. This year's flu vaccine is estimated at 55.7% [effectiveness](#) for preventing influenza-associated ED visits or hospitalizations among children of all ages. COVID-19 vaccination rates are also low, with only about 21% of adults and 10% of children having received the 2024/2025 formulation. It is not too late for children to be vaccinated. Here is what is currently happening across the state:

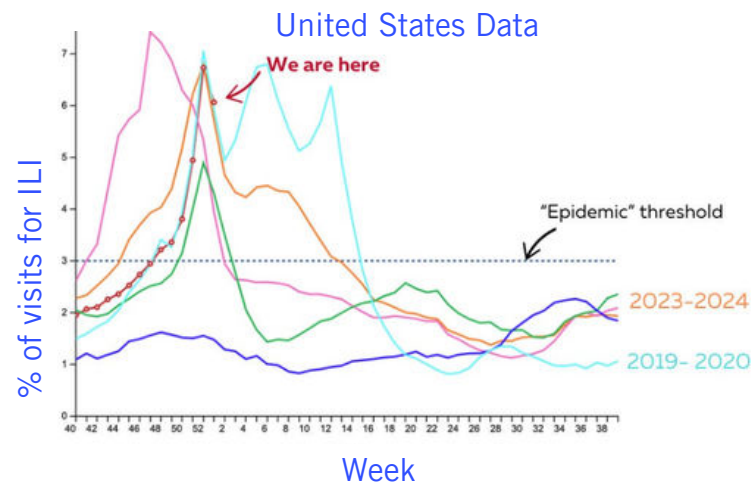


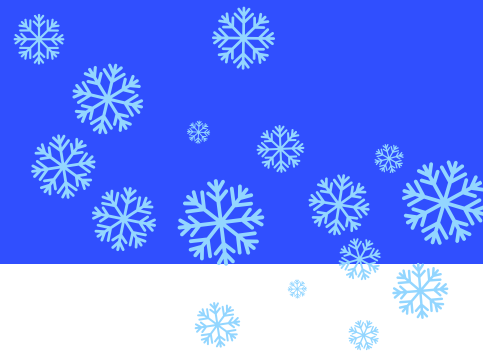
Image from: [We are likely at peak season](#)  
Respiratory State of Affairs: January 14, [Katelyn Jetelina](#)

As of January 11, 2025 - [Chicago Test Positivity](#)

- Influenza: 14.7%
- RSV: 12.0%
- COVID-19: 6.1%
- Two pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported in Chicago so far this season.

As of January 15, 2025: [Illinois Test Positivity](#)

- Influenza: 11.7%
- RSV: 12.5%
- COVID-19: 6.6%
- Four total pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported across the state so far this season.



## U.S. House Members Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Bolster Pediatric Vaccines

A new [bipartisan bill](#) was introduced by Congresswoman Kim Schrier, M.D. on November 22, 2024. This bill, called the *Strengthening the Vaccines for Children Program Act*, aims to better pediatric vaccine delivery by supporting primary care providers in reducing barriers to care and helping families catch up on routine vaccinations. Congresswoman Schrier reiterates the importance of the VFC program, citing the program's ability to help prevent approximately 508 million illnesses and 1.3 million deaths, saving nearly \$2.7 trillion in societal costs. The *Strengthening the Vaccines for Children Program Act* would:

- Improve patient access and care by expanding VFC eligibility to cover more children.
- Incentivize provider participation in the program and alleviate operational burdens.
- Expand vaccine counseling and education reimbursement to combat vaccine hesitancy.
- Track immunizations to better understand disparities and find pockets of under-vaccination.

This legislation is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

## HHS Vaccine Campaign: Let's Get Real

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has created a new campaign, [Let's Get Real](#), in an effort to battle vaccine misinformation. This campaign features personal stories from physicians on the importance of vaccines and includes videos and infographics that providers and parents can use. This [announcement](#) comes at a time when the near future vaccine landscape is very uncertain. The Let's Get Real program is working to amplify the voices of providers and "be[ing] more vocal about protecting our children" as Kaye Hayes, federal infectious disease official, stated at the program's announcement.

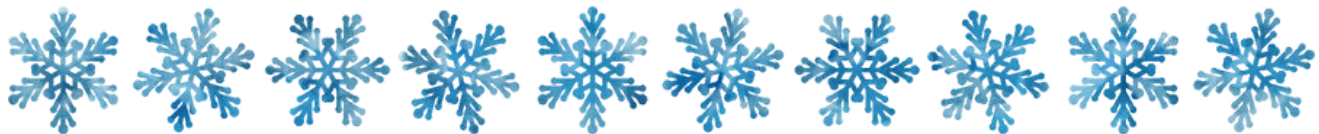
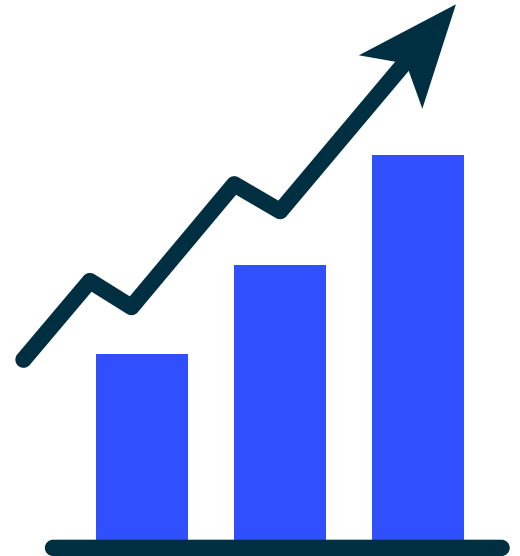


## Administering Rotavirus Vaccine in NICUs

Many neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) avoid vaccinating patients against rotavirus until discharge due to a theoretical risk of horizontal transmission of vaccine-strain rotavirus, but many infants become age-ineligible to receive vaccine before discharge. In a December 2024 [AAP article](#), during observation, 226 pentavalent rotavirus vaccine doses were administered and transmission of RV5 strain was infrequent and without clinical consequences. The benefits of allowing vaccine-induced protection against rotavirus disease in infants through in-NICU RV5 vaccination appear to have outweighed risks from vaccine-strain transmission. Thus, it is recommended that infants in the NICU receive the recommended dose of rotavirus vaccine as soon as they become eligible.

## Infectious Diseases and the Importance of Routine Immunizations

Globally, [measles](#) cases have gone up 20% in one year - from 8.6 million cases in 2022 to 10.3 million cases in 2023. The CDC and the WHO attribute this increase to a lack of vaccination. A [joint report](#) released by the WHO and the CDC shows that first-dose measles-containing vaccine coverage dropped from 86% in 2019 to 81% in 2021. In 2023, this rate rose slightly, to 83%. For sufficient coverage, communities should aim for 95% coverage of a two-dose series. Similarly, the recent surge in whooping cough cases in the U.S. is also attributed to declining vaccination rates. In 2024, whooping cough cases reached their highest levels in a decade. By December 13, the U.S. saw more than 32,000 cases. An increase was expected since whooping cough cases significantly decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, this is still concerning as case numbers are higher compared to 2019.



## RSV Prevention Strategies May Be Linked to Reduced Pediatric ICU Admissions

In a [JAMA study](#) published in October 2024, researchers conducted a multicenter, retrospective cross-sectional study to determine the potential relationship between RSV prevention strategies and pediatric ICU utilization. The findings suggest that if 65% to 85% of eligible children received RSV prevention, an estimated 2.1% to 2.8% reduction in pediatric ICU encounters and an estimated 4.5% to 5.9% reduction in pediatric ICU days could be achieved. RSV product access and acceptance have been identified as key barriers to prevention implementation. A [report](#) from March 2024 showed a 90% effectiveness against RSV hospitalizations for infants.

## Implementation of Immunization Services Through a Pediatric Urgent Care Clinic

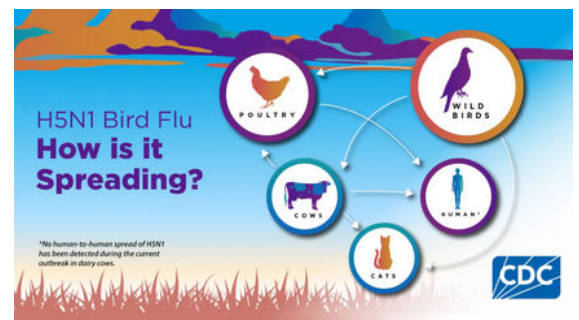
Pediatric urgent care (PUC) units might play an important role in increasing immunization rates. A [recent study](#) published by the AAP reviewed a quality improvement initiative where a federally qualified health center (FQHC) began offering routine immunizations through their PUC. Interventions included training, decision support, electronic health record signaling, and financial incentives. These provider interventions were not successful on their own, but following the addition of a designated nurse vaccinator (DNV), immunization screening rates increased from 44.7% to 67.4% and administration rates increased from 26.5% to 50.8%. The DNV was responsible for identifying eligible patients, pending vaccine orders, and administering overdue immunizations. PUCs present an additional touchpoint to recommend and administer vaccines, though additional research is needed to fully understand the reach and impact of such interventions.



## Bird Flu

The [first bird flu-associated death](#) in the U.S. was recently reported. A [state of emergency](#) around bird flu was also declared in California. This move was made in an effort to prevent further spread by minimizing farm worker exposures, reducing raw dairy product contamination, and mitigating the spread of the virus. The state of emergency also allows for additional resources and a quicker response to the outbreak.

On a national level, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced [\\$306 million](#) in funding to programs for preparedness, monitoring and research. This includes \$103 million to increase testing, monitoring of people exposed to infected animals, and outreach to high risk populations. As of January 15, 2025, there are 67 human cases in the U.S. There is still no known evidence of human to human transmission.





# Additional Resources

## Quick Reminders and Updates

- ★ From Moderna: [Master Class in Vaccination Communication](#)
- ★ Your Local Epidemiologist: [Routine Vaccination Questions](#)
- ★ From AAP: [Glossary of Digital Media Platforms](#)
- ★ HFS Provider Notice: [Coverage of Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Vaccination Ages 46 and Up](#)
- ★ Some health departments in the U.S. are telling staff they can [no longer promote flu and COVID vaccines](#)



## Monthly immunizations webinars are back! Take a peek at what's coming this year!

Date	Topic	Date	Topic
February 19	HPV Vaccinations – Trends & Updates	July 16	Addressing Immunization Challenges in Rural Communities
March 19	The History of Vaccines, Lessons Learned and a Look Back in time	August 20	Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy
April 16	Back to Basics: A Roadmap for Vaccine Advocacy & Policy	September 17	Preparing for Respiratory Virus Season
May 21	Summer Travel Vaccinations	November 19	Managing & Preparing for Outbreaks
June 18	Preparing for Back-to-School Season and Vaccine Exemptions in IL	December 17	AAP Immunizations Update and Best Practices from Other States

Register for these and other upcoming events at [illinoisAAP.org/events](https://illinoisAAP.org/events) or

