OFFICE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

DeKalb PUBLIC HEALTH

Winter Illness Report

Week of October 23rd, 2026

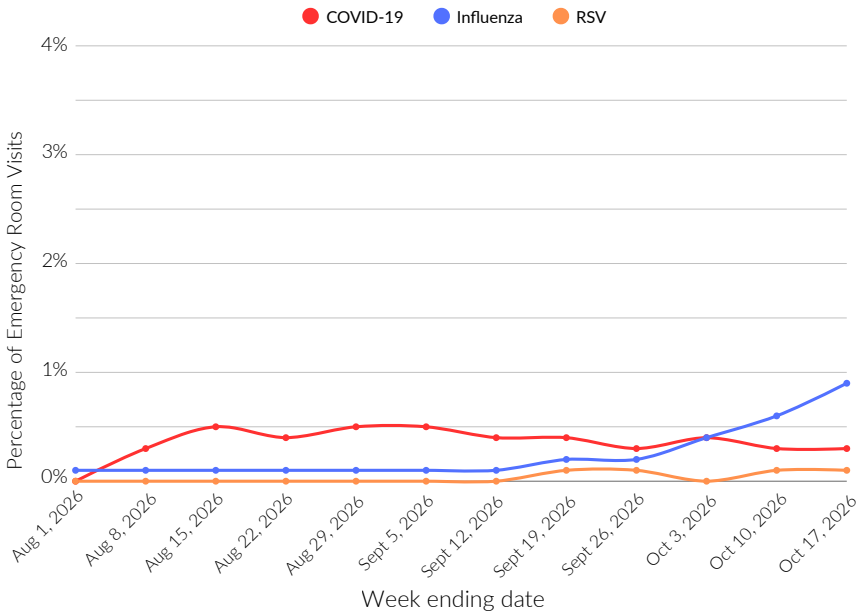
This report shares data through week ending October 17th, 2026, unless otherwise noted.

What is a respiratory illness?

A respiratory illness is an infection of the lungs and airways and can be caused by both viruses and bacteria. Common respiratory illnesses include, but are not limited to, COVID-19, influenza, and RSV.

Recent Respiratory Illness Trends in the Metro Area

Percentage of total emergency department visits associated with COVID-19 influenza, and RSV.



Respiratory illnesses in the metro area are down from last week.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Respiratory Virus Activity Levels, https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data/activity-levels.html

Everyday Precautions

Handwashing

Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.

Cover Coughs and Sneezes

Cover coughs and sneezes with an elbow or tissue. If you use a tissue, throw it away.

Consider a Face Mask

Consider wearing a face mask. Be sure you're wearing the mask properly (cover nose and mouth), especially indoors around others.

Avoid Sick Individuals

Avoid close contact with sick individuals. Take precautions when around those who are sick.

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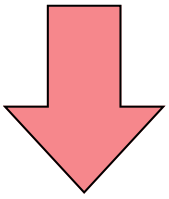
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Georgia Respiratory Trends

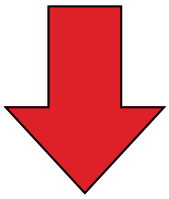
This section reflects the changes from the week ending on 10/10/2026 to the week ending on 10/17/2026, unless otherwise noted.



Common Cold (Rhinovirus)

Of all the lab tests for rhinovirus in Georgia, the percentage of positive tests decreased from 21.0% to 19.7%. This indicates that **common cold cases are decreasing** in Georgia.

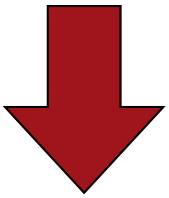
Source: Georgia Department of Health, Weekly Flu Report Week 41



COVID-19

Georgia's COVID-19-associated hospitalization rate decreased from 1.0 per 100,000 people to 0.6 this week. This means that **COVID-19 hospitalizations are decreasing** in Georgia.

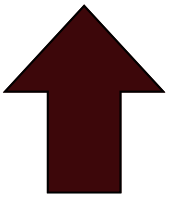
CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker, COVID-NET Hospitalization Surveillance Network, Week 40 and 41



Flu (Influenza)

Of all the lab tests for influenza in Georgia, the percentage of positive tests decreased from 3.9% to 3.3%. This indicates that **flu cases are decreasing** in Georgia.

Source: Georgia Department of Health, Weekly Flu Report Week 41



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Of all the PCR* tests for RSV in Georgia, the percentage of positive tests increased from 1.6% to 1.7%. This indicates that **RSV cases are increasing** in Georgia.

*polymerase chain reaction
Source: Georgia Department of Health, Weekly Flu Report Week 41

**Data may be adjusted from previous week's report to account for reporting lag.

Vaccine Information

Get Vaccinated

Vaccines prepare your body to defend against viruses and severe illness. Some vaccines train your immune system to recognize a virus and produce antibodies, while others provide antibodies directly. Vaccination reduces infection risk and prevents severe illness and death.

DeKalb Public Health can help you access vaccinations, including finding a clinic and understanding recommendations.

Learn More

Continue below for fact sheets on these winter illnesses:

- Common cold
- COVID-19
- Flu (Influenza)
- Pneumonia
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus
- Strep throat
- Whooping cough (Pertussis)

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Common Cold

What is the common cold?

The common cold is a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract. Colds are caused by a variety of viruses and usually last less than a week.

How is the common cold spread?

Respiratory viruses spread in different ways. Most spread through droplets that an infected person releases when they cough or sneeze.

These droplets can enter your body if you breathe them in or touch a contaminated surface and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Some viruses can also spread through close contact, such as shaking hands with an infected person and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

What are the signs and symptoms of the common cold?

The signs and symptoms include:

- Runny nose or nasal congestion
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Mild body aches
- Fever (usually low grade in older children and adults)

They usually peak within 2 to 3 days of becoming infected.

Which viruses cause the common cold?

More than 200 respiratory viruses can cause colds. Rhinoviruses are the most frequent cause of colds in the U.S.

Other respiratory viruses in the U.S. that can cause colds are:

- Common human coronaviruses
- Parainfluenza viruses
- Adenoviruses
- Enteroviruses (including EV-D68)
- Human metapneumovirus

What should I do if I become sick with the common cold?

Stay home from work, school, and other activities until 24 hours after you're feeling better and have no fever.

If your symptoms worsen, contact your physician.

Is there a vaccine for the common cold?

There is no vaccine for the common cold.

(09.25)

For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/common-cold/about/index.html

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COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It can be very contagious and spread quickly. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 can spread in two ways:

- An infected person can breathe, cough or sneeze out droplets with tiny particles that contain the virus. Another person can breathe them in or the droplets can land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- An infected person can cough or sneeze on their hands, not wash them, and then touch a surface. Another person can touch the surface and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Anyone with COVID-19 can spread it, even if they do not have symptoms. COVID-19 can even spread from people to animals in some situations.

What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

Common signs and symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If you have several of these symptoms, take an at-home COVID test.

What should I do if I become sick with COVID-19?

Stay home from work, school, and other activities until 24 hours after you feel better and have no fever.

If your symptoms worsen, contact your physician.

Vaccine Information

6 months old and older

Vaccination should be based on shared clinical decision-making.

- "Shared clinical decision-making" means consulting a provider when determining if you should get vaccinated for a certain illness. Providers include physicians, nurses, and pharmacists.

The benefit of COVID-19 vaccination is most favorable for individuals who are at an increased risk for severe disease and lowest for individuals who are not at an increased risk.

For the list of factors that can put you at an increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease, see cdc.gov/covid/risk-factors.

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For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html

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Flu (Influenza)

What is flu?

Flu, or influenza, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. They can cause mild to severe illness and can lead to death.

How is flu spread?

Flu can spread in two ways:

- An infected person can breathe, cough or sneeze out droplets with tiny particles that contain the virus. Another person can breathe them in or the droplets can land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- An infected person can cough or sneeze on their hands, not wash them, and then touch a surface. Another person can touch the surface and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Anyone with flu can spread it, even if they do not have symptoms.

What are the signs and symptoms of flu?

The signs and symptoms include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)

Flu symptoms often develop quickly. Vomiting and diarrhea can also occur; they are more common in children.

What should I do if I become sick with flu?

Stay home from work, school, and other activities until 24 hours after you're feeling better and have no fever.

If your symptoms worsen, contact your physician.

Vaccine Information

Who should get the flu vaccine?

Everyone ages 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine.*

Why is it important?

- Flu vaccination can prevent illness, lessen symptoms, and prevent hospitalization and death.
- Vaccination is particularly important for people who are at higher risk of serious complications.

When should I get it?

Everyone should be vaccinated by the end of October every year.

*With rare exceptions.

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For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines/vaccinations.html

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Pneumonia

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. It can be caused by several types of germs, including bacteria, viruses, and (less commonly) fungi and parasites.

How is pneumonia spread?

Pneumonia-causing germs spread when an infected person breathes out droplets with tiny particles that contain the germ. Another person can breathe them in or the droplets can land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.

What are the signs and symptoms of pneumonia?

The signs and symptoms are:

- Chest pain when breathing or coughing
- Confusion
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Fever or chills
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Shortness of breath

What should I do if I become sick with pneumonia?

Stay home from work, school, and other activities until 24 hours after you're feeling better and have no fever.

If your symptoms worsen, contact your physician.

Vaccine Information

Why is vaccination important?

- Pneumonia can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages.
- Children under 5 years old and adults over 65 years old are at higher risk for developing severe illness.

Vaccines against bacterial infections

There are vaccines for the following pneumonia-causing infections:

- *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib) disease
- Pneumococcal disease
- Whooping cough (pertussis)

Vaccines against viral infections

There are vaccines for these viral infections:

- COVID-19
- Influenza
- Measles
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)
- Varicella (chickenpox)

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For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/pneumonia/prevention/index.html

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Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

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What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that infects the nose, throat, and lungs. It usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms, but can be severe in infants and older adults.

How is RSV spread?

RSV spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets with tiny particles that contain the virus. Another person can breathe them in or the droplets can land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.

The virus can also spread through direct contact, such as kissing an infected child or touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

What are the signs and symptoms of RSV?

The signs and symptoms are:

- Runny nose
- Congestion
- Decreased appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

Note: Very young infants may only be irritable, less active, and have trouble breathing.

People usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days of becoming infected.

What should I do if I become sick with RSV?

Stay home from work, school, and other activities until 24 hours after you're feeling better and have no fever.

If your symptoms worsen, contact your physician.

Immunization Information

Babies

The CDC recommends all babies be protected from severe RSV infection by one of these options:

- A maternal RSV vaccine can be given between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy during September through January.
- An RSV antibody can be given directly to babies younger than 8 months of age during October through March.

Most babies don't need both.

Adults 75 and over

All adults ages 75 and older are recommended to receive the vaccine.

Immunocompromised persons

Children ages 8-19 months and adults ages 60-74 who are at increased risk for severe RSV infection are recommended to receive the vaccine.

(09.25)

For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/vaccines/index.html

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Strep Throat

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is caused by a bacterial infection in the throat and tonsils. It can range from mild to severe illness.

How is strep throat spread?

Strep throat spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets with tiny particles that contain the bacteria. Another person can breathe them in or the droplets can land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.

It can also spread when someone uses the same plate, utensils, or glass as someone who is infected.

What are the signs and symptoms of strep throat?

The signs and symptoms are:

- Fever
- Pain when swallowing
- Red, swollen tonsils
- Sore throat that started very quickly
- Swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck
- Tiny, red spots on the roof of the mouth
- White patches or streaks of pus on the tonsils

People usually show symptoms within 2 to 5 days of infection.

Who is at risk for becoming sick with strep throat?

- Anyone can become sick with strep throat.
- Children 5 through 15 years old are the most at risk.

What should I do if I become sick?

- Get tested for strep throat.
- If you test positive, stay home and away from others until you no longer have a fever and have been taking antibiotics for at least 24 hours.
- If the symptoms worsen, contact a physician.

Vaccine Information

There is no vaccine for strep throat.

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For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/group-a-strep/about/strep-throat.html

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Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a respiratory illness caused by bacteria. The bacteria attach to the lining of the upper respiratory system and release a poison that causes the airways to swell.

How is whooping cough spread?

Whooping cough spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets with tiny particles that contain the bacteria. Another person can breathe them in or the droplets can land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Someone with even mild whooping cough symptoms can spread it.

What are the signs and symptoms of whooping cough?

The signs and symptoms include:

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Low-grade fever (less than 100.4°F)
- Mild, occasional cough
- High-pitched “whoop” when inhaling after a cough
- Vomiting during/after coughing fits
- Difficulty breathing
- Rib fracture

People usually show symptoms within 5 to 10 days after becoming infected.

What should I do if I become sick with whooping cough?

Stay home from work, school, and other activities until you have been taking antibiotics for at least 5 days.

You should also stay away from infants and young children until you have been taking antibiotics for at least 5 days.

Vaccine Information

Who should get the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine?

- Everyone should get the pertussis vaccine.
- Babies and children under 7 years old receive the DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) vaccine.
- Older children and adults receive the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine.

Why is it important?

- Whooping cough can affect people of all ages.
- Babies under 1 year old are at greatest risk for severe complications.

How well do the vaccines work?

- Pertussis vaccines work well, but protection decreases over time.
- Speak to your doctor about when it’s time to receive a Tdap booster.

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For more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/vaccines/types.html

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