

Respiratory virus activity in BC:

Weekly summary – September 26, 2024

BC Summary | September 15-21, 2024 (Epi-week 38)

COVID-19 activity is increasing; Influenza and RSV are minimal.

Influenza	RSV
Influenza activity is minimal.	RSV activity is minimal.
COVID-19	Health care visits
SARS-CoV-2 levels in wastewater are high, and hospital admission rates are increasing, but below 2022/23 rates for this time.	The proportion of primary care visits for respiratory illness is increasing among children, similar to trends last year.

Facility Outbreaks

Due to system upgrades, the Facility Outbreaks dashboard will begin weekly updates later this season. See below for a summary of new long-term care facility (LTCF) and acute care facility (ACF) outbreaks in the current reporting week.

- There were 3 COVID-19 ACF outbreaks reported in Fraser Health and 1 COVID-19 ACF outbreak reported in Interior Health (IH).
- There was 1 influenza ACF outbreak reported in IH.

National and international context

Influenza

- In Canada, influenza percent positivity is stable at low levels and remains at inter-seasonal levels.¹
- In the USA, seasonal influenza activity (including laboratory testing, hospitalizations, and deaths) remains stable at low levels.²

¹ Respiratory virus trends in Canada. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/respiratory-virus-detections/>

² Weekly US Influenza Surveillance Report: Key Updates for Week 37. <https://www.cdc.gov/fluview/surveillance/2024-week-37.html>

RSV

- In Canada, RSV percent positivity is stable at low levels.¹
- In the USA, RSV activity remains low.³

COVID-19

- In Canada, COVID-19 indicators are stable at elevated levels compared to the spring; however, trends vary across provinces and territories.⁴
- In the USA, weekly SARS-CoV-2 test positivity, the proportion of emergency department visits diagnosed as COVID-19, and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to decrease, meanwhile deaths due to COVID-19 remain stable.⁵

Other respiratory viruses

- In Canada, the percent positivity for human parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, human metapneumovirus, enterovirus/rhinovirus, and seasonal human coronavirus are near expected levels for this time of year.¹

Southern Hemisphere

Respiratory virus activity in the Southern Hemisphere does not entirely predict what will happen in the Northern Hemisphere but it can provide useful information in planning for our coming respiratory season.

Influenza

The 2024 influenza season in the Southern Hemisphere was characterized predominantly by influenza A (with co-circulation of both A(H1N1) and A(H3N2)), with significant impact on children. Influenza B was detected across jurisdictions, at comparable or lower levels to the 2023 season. The start of influenza activity and when peak influenza activity occurred was similar to the 2023 season.

- In Australia, influenza cases and hospitalizations increased in May and peaked in July.⁶ Historically, influenza activity in Australia begins to increase in May, peaking in August/September, although recent seasons (2019-2023) have peaked earlier, in June/July.⁷ The overall trend of influenza cases and hospitalizations in 2024 occurred with similar timing to the 2023 season, although cases were higher in 2024 compared to both the 2023 season and the five-year historical mean (2017 to 2019 and 2022 to 2023 seasons). Influenza A was the predominant influenza virus during the season, with influenza A(H1N1) and influenza A(H3N2) both co-circulating.
 - Influenza case rates were highest among children less than 10 years old.

³ Respiratory Illness Data Channel. <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data/index.html>

⁴ COVID-19 epidemiology update: Summary. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/>

⁵ COVID Data Tracker. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

⁶ Australian Respiratory Surveillance Report. Report 12 (2024). [Australian Respiratory Surveillance Report 12 – 26 August to 8 September 2024 \(health.gov.au\)](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/aisr-2023-national-influenza-season-summary.pdf)

⁷ Australian Influenza Surveillance Report – 2023 End of Season Summary. December 2023.

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/aisr-2023-national-influenza-season-summary.pdf>

- Influenza mortality rates were highest in those aged 70 years or over.
- Of the 2,862 influenza samples assessed thus far in 2024, 98% of A(H1N1), 91% of A(H3N2), and 100% of B/Victoria isolates were antigenically similar to their corresponding vaccine components.
- In South Africa, influenza activity increased in late April and peaked in early June with transmission and impact at moderate and high levels, respectively.⁸ Although influenza A(H1N1) was the predominant influenza virus during this season, influenza B detections increased in mid-July and was the main virus type detected in early September. The start and peak of the 2024 season occurred with similar timing to the 2023 season. However, influenza detections have continued at low levels later into this season, while the 2023 season ended in early July.^{8,9}
- In Chile, influenza cases peaked in late May, at levels 2-3 times higher than the previous two seasons. Of those subtyped, the majority were influenza A(H3N2).^{10,11}

RSV

- In Australia, RSV cases increased from January, peaking in late May, and continued to decrease as of early September.⁶ RSV cases have been almost 1.5 times higher during the 2024 season than the 2023 season, which may be attributed to changes in testing strategies, health-seeking behavior, and increases in RSV community circulation.⁶
 - RSV case rates were highest among children under 5 years of age.
 - RSV mortality rates were highest among those aged 70 years or over.
- In South Africa, RSV activity increased from early February and peaked in mid-April at a moderate level before the season ended in early July, about one month later than the prior season.⁸
- In Chile, RSV cases peaked in early August, at levels lower than previous two seasons.^{10,11}

COVID-19

The timing of COVID-19 transmission patterns and peak activity was variable across the Southern Hemisphere.

- In Australia, COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations increased in April, peaking in late May/early June at levels comparable to the 2023 season, before decreasing back to early spring levels.⁶
 - COVID-19 case and mortality rates were highest among those aged 70 years or over.
- In South Africa, COVID-19 continued to circulate at low levels since January.⁸
- In Chile, COVID-19 cases increased in January, peaking in March.^{10,11}

⁸ Weekly Respiratory Pathogens Surveillance Report Week 36 (2024). South Africa. [Resp Path Report 2024 36 20240912 final.pdf \(nicd.ac.za\)](#)

⁹ Weekly Respiratory Pathogens Surveillance Report Week 36 (2023). South Africa. [Weekly-RPSR-FluRSVARS-CoV2Pertussis-Week-36-Final.pdf \(nicd.ac.za\)](#)

¹⁰ Informe de Circulación de Virus Respiratorios. SE37 (2024). <https://www.ispch.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Informe-circulacion-virus-respiratorios-SE37-17-09-2024.pdf>

¹¹ PAHO - Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, RSV and other Respiratory Viruses Regional Situation. 36-2024. [Influenza, SARS-CoV-2, RSV and other Respiratory Viruses Regional Situation - PAHO/WHO | Pan American Health Organization](#)