
Viral Illnesses on the Rise Across the U.S.



U.S. government health officials have warned of an early and severe start to flu season. As the lockdowns during the pandemic reduced interactions for children, they are now being exposed to respiratory viruses for the first time again.

Across the nation, figures have illustrated a fast increase in cases of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenzas.

Influenza activity continues to increase as the number of hospitalisations and deaths have doubled within a week. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predict that there have been approximately 1.6 million illnesses, 13,000 hospitalisations and 730 deaths from influenza in the past weeks.

RSV cases are increasing nationally; hospitalisations are significantly increasing, with cumulative hospitalisation rates increasing among all age groups, especially in children.

Recent data from the US Department of Health and Human Services show that across the nation more than three-quarters of pediatric hospital beds and pediatric ICU beds are in use. They remain fuller than the past two years with RSV patients and other conditions.

Unfortunately, the spikes in viral illnesses are placing added strain on hospitals, which means hospital capacity and medical supplies may be a potential issue.

Therefore, it is important that government health officials closely monitor health care systems and capacity across the country.

Dawn O'Connell, assistant secretary for Preparedness and Response at CDC, said, "We are monitoring capacity across the country sharing best practices to reduce the strain on systems and standing by to deploy additional personnel and supplies as needed".

When COVID-19 was at its peak, extra mitigation measures were taken to prevent the spread of the virus, including social distancing, lockdown measures and masking. However, with the measures lifted, people are left more vulnerable to flu viruses.

Dr. Romero, director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, emphasised that vaccination is the best protection against these infections.

Additionally, CDC has been ramping up their strategy to support the health system cope better with the spikes in viral illnesses. Doctors are provided with more information regarding who should qualify for the test-to-treat strategies, meaning doctor should test their patients as soon as they feel unwell to take advantage of early antiviral treatments.

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