

High Consequence Infectious Disease

December 14, 2022

Tripledemic

US faces a tripledemic of influenza, RSV and COVID:

- Flu cases are higher than normal for this time of year, RSV cases are soaring and straining pediatric and NICU beds and COVID is still circulating
- With few to no restrictions in place, and travel and socializing in full swing, cases are expected to soar this winter
- Additionally, people's immunity seems to be lower than the past, after the precautions taken from the COVID pandemic
- RSV causes about 14,000 deaths among adults 65 and older and up to 300 deaths among children under the age of 5 each year
 - CDC Issued a health alert on Nov. 4: [Increased Respiratory Virus Activity, Especially Among Children, early in the 2022-2023 Fall and Winter](#)
 - No vaccine is available, but they are in late-stage trials for two candidates
- COVID cases are low, but beginning to rise in some parts of the country and world
 - France, Germany, and Britain are seeing a rise in hospitalizations and deaths, leading experts to be concerned a similar wave will follow in the US
 - Some COVID variants are also picking up momentum, while drugs such as Evusheld and Bebtelovimab, are becoming less effective
 - Few people are getting the COVID booster; only about 11% of those eligible for the bivalent omicron boosters have gotten boosted
- CDC has been tracking early and increase influenza activity
 - Cumulative influenza-associated hospitalization rates for children 0-17 years of age are notably higher compared to the same time periods during previous seasons since 2010-2011
 - This year's flu season began six weeks earlier than normal, and reportedly more severe than it has been in 13 years
 - So far this year, flu has already caused 4,500 deaths, including 14 from children
 - Flu vaccinations are down by about 10% to 15% from previous years

Impacts:

- Additional strain on the already slim healthcare workforce
 - Fewer available beds
 - Longer wait times
 - Challenges in patient transfers
- Potential implementation of surge plans
- Potential risk of PPE or other supply shortages
 - Currently albuterol and amoxicillin shortages

Preparedness:

- Healthcare providers offer flu and COVID vaccinations to all those eligible
- Utilize antiviral medications per guidance
- Schedule routine meetings with your local partners for situational awareness
- Consider joint public messaging to build consistency and gain public trust
- Increase awareness and access to vaccination and treatment to underrepresented populations in your communities, as studies have revealed racial and ethnic disparities in severe flu and COVID outcomes
- Consider recommending quality medical masks for public transportation, airplanes, and crowded places

Sources:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/11/22/1137649962/experts-are-concerned-thanksgiving-gatherings-could-accelerate-a-tripledemic>

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/11/04/flu-rsv-covid-cases-surge/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2022/12/07/face-masks-tripledemic-flu-covid-rsv/>