

Alleghany Respiratory Disease Interim Update

December 16th, 2022

Trends, Updates & Important Points

- CDC Community Levels within North Carolina have increased. Alleghany is at a medium community level. Watauga and Ashe Counties remain low.
- COVID-19 statewide hospitalizations are on the rise with an increase from 3.5% ED visits for COVID-like illness the week of 11/19 to 4.3% the week of 12/10.
- Flu hospitalization rates are decreasing within North Carolina, but still remain with many fatal cases across North Carolina.
- Most deaths are occurring in adults age 65+, however there have been many younger individuals hospitalized and who have had fatal cases as well (see Influenza Associated Deaths Reported in NC by Age Group figure).
- With COVID cases on the rise, be aware of testing options and resources (see COVID-19 Resources). NCDHHS has partnered with StarMed to offer free telehealth treatment services for people who are COVID-19 positive. Antiviral pills are a safe treatment for those who test positive within 5 days of feeling sick & are at risk of severe illness. Visit [StarMed.Care/NC](https://www.starmed.com/care/nc).
- As the Holiday Season is upon us, prepare yourself with knowledge of ways to keep you and your loved ones safe.

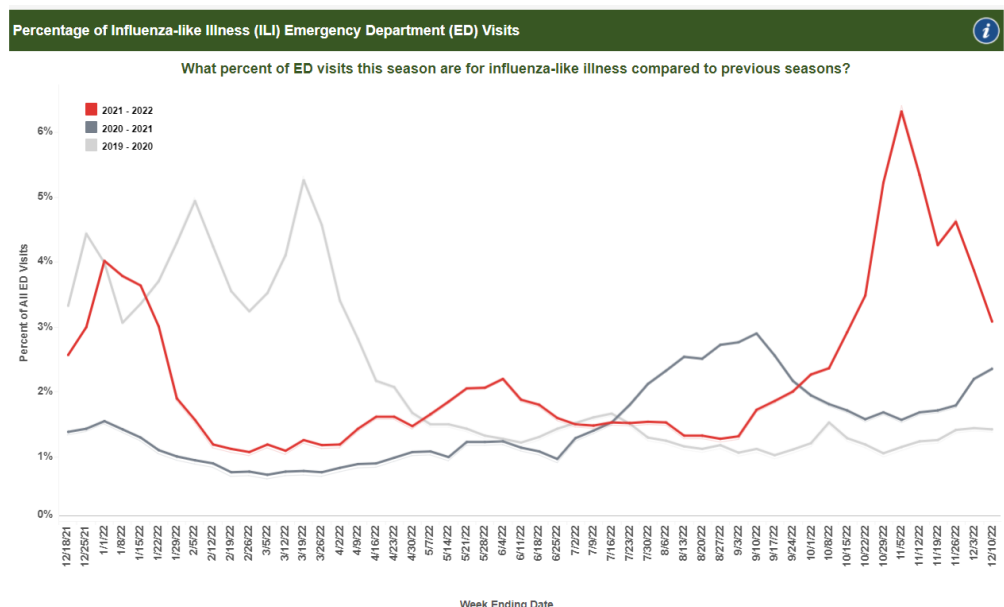
Respiratory Virus Surveillance and Recommendations

New Respiratory Virus Surveillance Dashboard

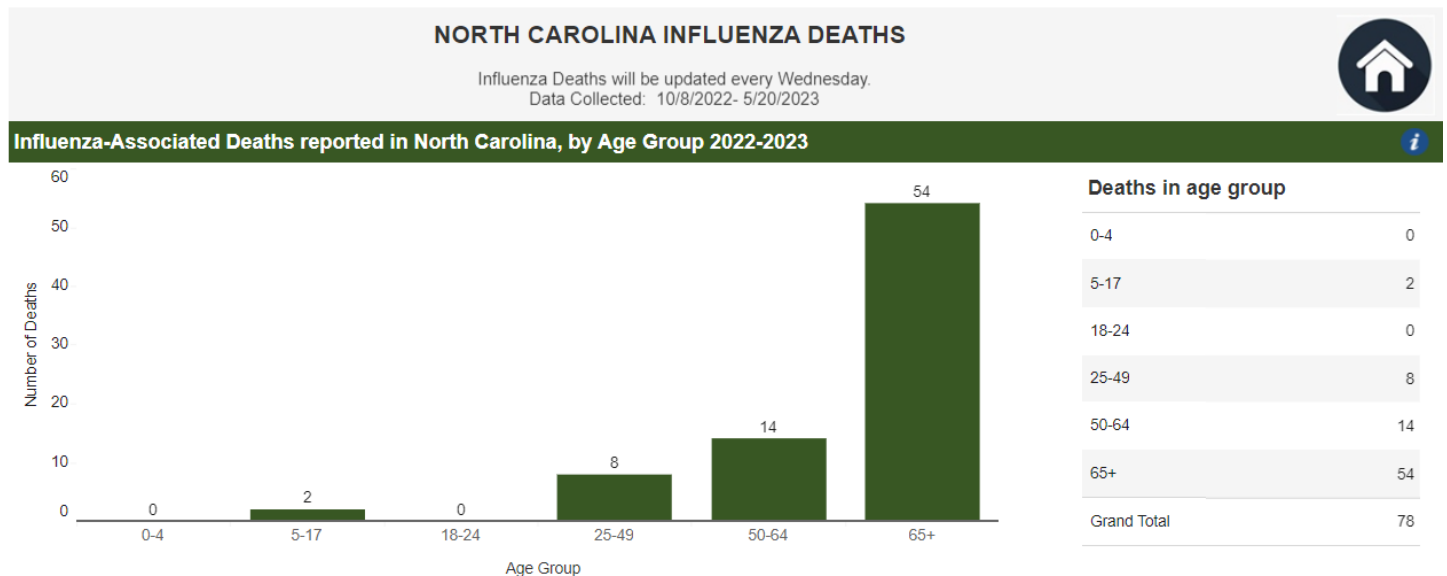
[NC DHHS's Respiratory Virus Surveillance Dashboard](#) shows past and present trends.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Influenza (flu)

- Consistently higher rates of ED visits for flu-like illness than 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- 3.1% of Emergency Department (ED) visits this week are attributed to influenza-like illness, which is higher than the two previous years.



- Flu-like illness is causing many deaths across age groups, with the highest number of deaths being in adults ages 65 and older. However, 22 people ages 25-64 have died from flu in North Carolina since October, 2022.



A bar graph displaying the total number of deaths by age group throughout the influenza season.

Prevention Basics:

- Get up to date with a flu shot and your COVID-19 vaccine series or booster. This is especially important for anyone who has an underlying health condition or is age 50 or older. Also, if you are 65 and older, consider getting a pneumonia vaccine as well.
- Stay home when you are sick and get a test to determine if you have the flu, COVID, or something else that needs treatment by a healthcare provider.
- Wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer when you do not have access to soap and water.
- Make a plan before you get sick. Stock up on COVID-19 test kits at home and talk to your healthcare provider about getting access to treatment for flu or COVID if you become sick.
- Consider your risks and layer protection, including using a high quality mask when you may be in crowded areas or around people who may be at high risk for severe illness.

Holiday Prevention Measures:

- Layered prevention is best. For gatherings high-quality masks are good tools to help block virus particles such as N95s or KN95s.
- Increased ventilation is a strong mechanism for added protection, including spending time outside, and when the weather does not allow, the use of HEPA filters, opened windows and ceiling fans.
- Get vaccinated for flu, COVID (including all recommended boosters), and pneumonia if you are 65 or older.
- Stay home if you have symptoms or are feeling sick. If you have COVID and are symptomatic, preliminary evidence shows that you are more likely to spread it than someone who is asymptomatic.

Symptoms to Watch Out for:

- RSV, flu and COVID-19 are all respiratory viruses so a lot of the symptoms someone could experience are similar. Common symptoms can be fever, cough, fatigue, congestion/stuffy nose, sore throat and headache. Additionally, RSV may include signs of wheezing, rapid or belly breathing and needs prompt attention by contacting your healthcare provider for guidance.
- If you have any of these symptoms, we encourage you to use an at-home test for COVID-19 and/or see your healthcare provider early so they may be able to provide early evaluation and treatment medication. If you have shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, it is important to seek emergency care, but only in a true emergency.
- If you are age 50 or older or if you have an underlying health condition you may be at greater risk for complications from the respiratory viruses like flu and COVID-19. Finding out whether you have COVID-19 and/or the flu or RSV can direct your provider to prescribe the most appropriate treatment to decrease your risk of a severe case of illness. Now is the time to make sure you have COVID-19 at-home tests readily available and a plan for contacting your family healthcare provider in case you or someone in your family does get sick. We offer free at-home COVID-19 test kits and anyone is welcome to come by our offices and pick some up while supplies last.

When to Seek Medical Help:

- If someone is experiencing severe symptoms like shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, pain or pressure in their chest, confusion/disorientation, inability to stay awake or wake up or other concerning symptoms, seek emergency care immediately. For parents who are concerned their child is ill, please contact your healthcare provider early for testing and treatment. If you see signs of troubled breathing, wheezing, blue skin, nails or lips, please seek emergency care immediately.
- If someone is sick, we encourage them to reach out to a healthcare provider to see what kind of testing is recommended. There are treatments available for both COVID-19 and the flu that can be prescribed by a healthcare provider and it is important to start the treatment early and not wait.

Alleghany County COVID-19 Updates

(Community level data and guidance per the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), accessed December 16th, 2022)

**COVID-19 Community Level:
Medium**

Guidance: If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions. Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, and get tested if you have symptoms

Weekly Metrics Used to Determine the COVID-19 Community Level

Case Rate per 100,000 population	98.77
New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population	17.5
% Staffed inpatient beds in use by patients with confirmed COVID-19	2.9%

COVID-19 Deaths:

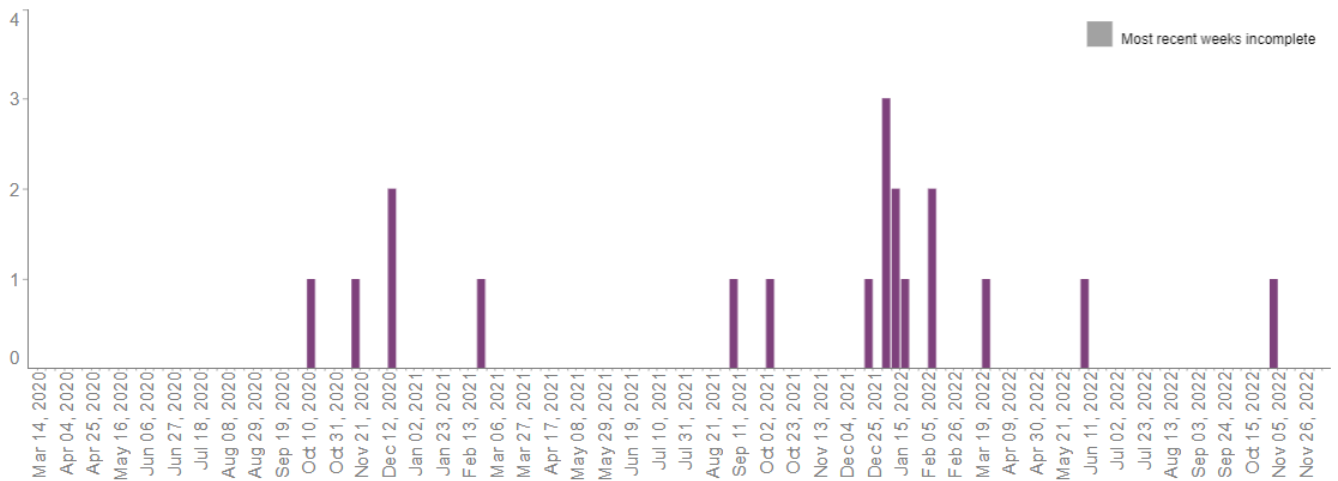
(COVID-19 death data per [North Carolina Health and Human Services](#), accessed December 16th, 2022)

The majority of COVID-19 related deaths occur among individuals who are unvaccinated. Staying up to date on vaccination, including boosters recommended by the CDC, remains the most effective way to prevent severe outcomes like severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Deaths

All Time:

19 Total Deaths in Alleghany County



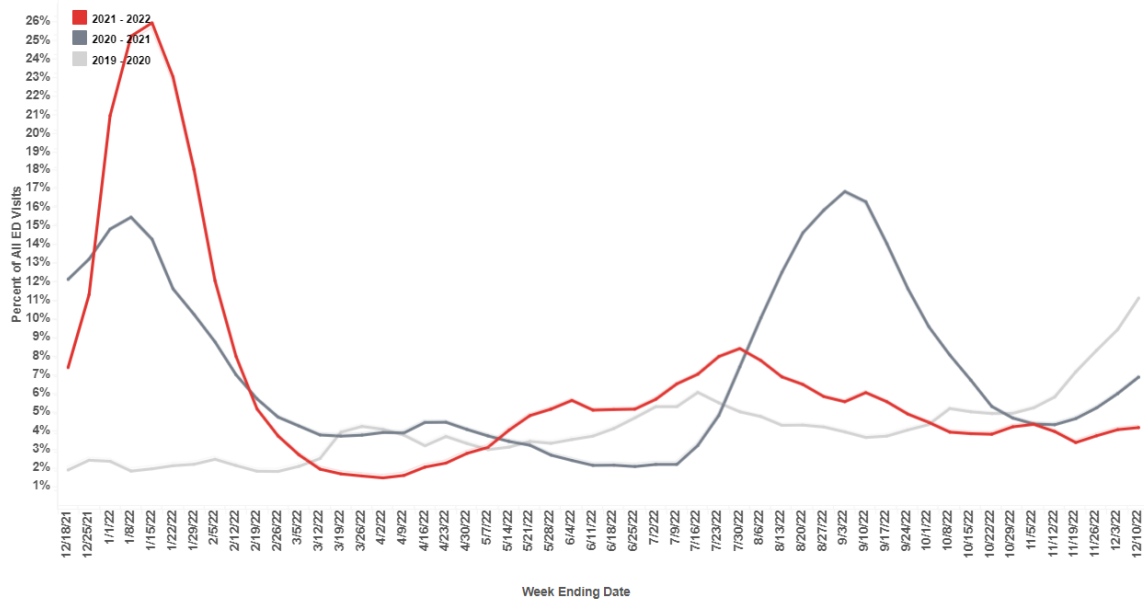
COVID-19 Hospitalization Data

The hospitalization data reflects emergency department (ED) visits for COVID-like illness in the state of North Carolina. Data is up to date through 12/10/2022, but more recent data may be incomplete due to delays in reporting.

Percentage of COVID-like Illness (CLI) Emergency Department (ED) Visits



What Percentage of ED Visits this Season are for COVID-like Illness Compared to Previous Seasons?



North Carolina COVID-19 Case Updates

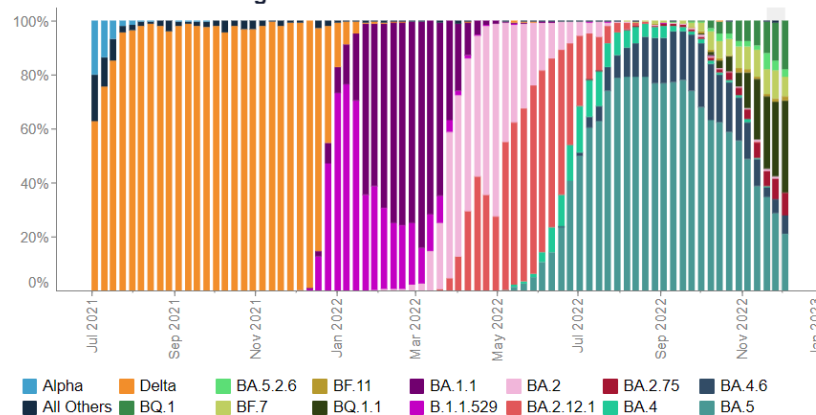
North Carolina State Synopsis

The North Carolina COVID-19 State Synopsis can be viewed at: [COVID-19 State Profile Report](#), which is provided by White House COVID-19 Team, Joint Coordination Cell, Data Strategy and Execution Workgroup.

COVID-19 Variants Detected in North Carolina by Week

The Omicron variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. Current COVID-19 vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths from the COVID-19 variants. The best way to protect yourself is by getting a COVID-19 vaccination, and booster once eligible.

What variants are being detected in North Carolina?



Percentage of variants reported each week by laboratories that sequence to identify COVID-19 variants. (Most cases and tests are not identified by variants; this is a smaller sample.) [More info](#)

Last Two Weeks
Nov 20, 2022 - Dec 03, 2022

Category	Type	Sequenced Cases	% of Total
Omicron	BA.2	2	0.40%
	BA.2.75	40	7.95%
	BA.4.6	30	5.96%
	BA.5	129	25.65%
	BF.7	46	9.15%
	BA.5.2.6	17	3.38%
	BF.11	6	1.19%
	BQ.1	78	15.51%
Other	BQ.1.1	153	30.42%
	All Others	2	0.40%

Data on COVID-19 Variants Detected in North Carolina by Week was accessed from and can be viewed at: [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' COVID-19 Surveillance Study](#).

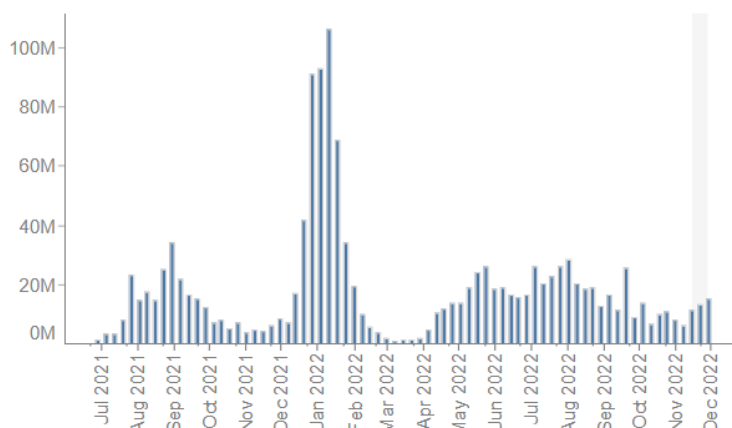
State Wastewater Surveillance Data

NC Department of Health and Human Services is collecting wastewater samples from an increasing set of participating wastewater treatment plants across NC to test for levels of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Individuals infected with COVID-19 shed viral particles in their stool, which can be measured in wastewater. This metric will be increasingly important in measuring the amount of virus at the community level, as it provides information regarding the levels of virus independently of testing participation or reporting.

15.2 Million → Previous Week 13.4 Million

COVID-19 Virus Particles Found in Wastewater

COVID-19 virus particles appearing in wastewater can signal how quickly the virus is spreading, even if people don't get tested or have symptoms.



Average COVID-19 virus copies found per person per week from participating North Carolina wastewater treatment plants. [More Info](#)

State wastewater surveillance data is from the NC DHHS dashboard, where it is updated weekly and can be accessed [here](#).

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AppHealthCare COVID-19 Call Center: (828) 795-1970

General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com

Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com

www.AppHealthCare.com and follow us on Facebook & Twitter

