

NEWS

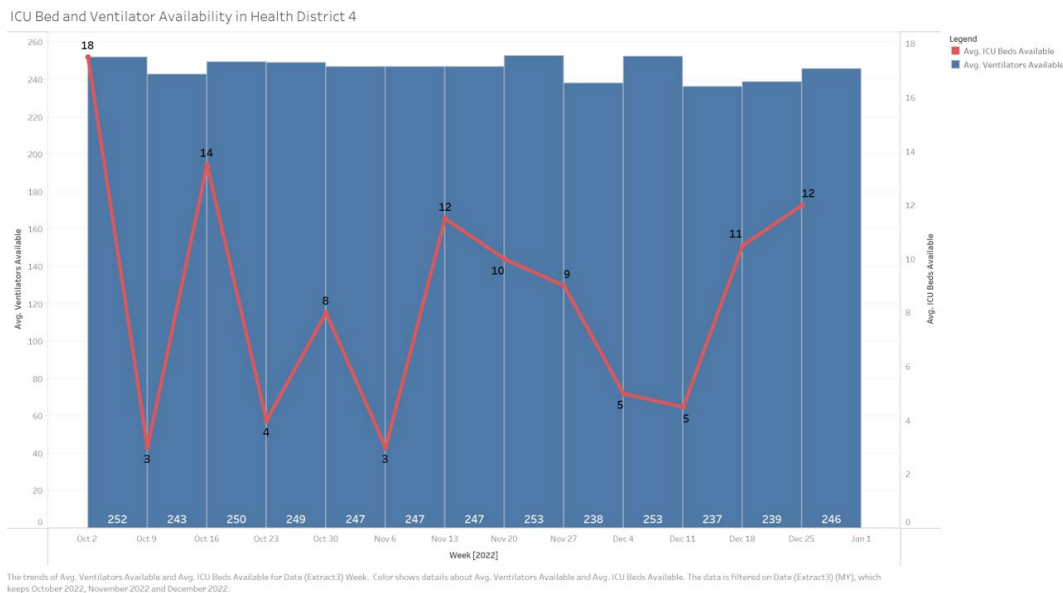
For Immediate Release

CDH Encourages Residents to Reduce the Risk of Severe Respiratory Illness

BOISE, Jan., 5, 2023 – With the recent increase in respiratory illnesses spreading around the Treasure Valley, [Central District Health](#) (CDH) encourages residents to be mindful of the current situation for the remainder of this winter season.

Recently, cases have been increasing among influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19, throughout the state and Central Idaho, as seen in data provided from [Idaho Department of Health and Welfare](#) (IDHW). These illnesses are decreasing the availability of hospital beds throughout the region.

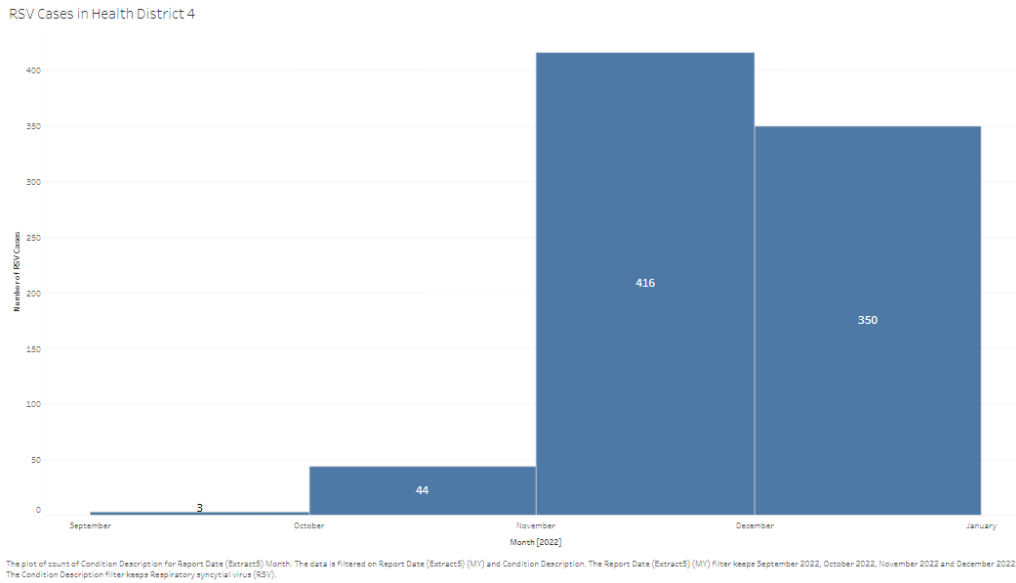
(Figure 1, attached as IRTS.png)



Respiratory Syncytial Virus

RSV is a common respiratory virus seen in the late fall, exhibited by mild, cold-like symptoms. RSV cases began much earlier than in recent years, sitting at an overall 19.9 percent positivity rate for the season in the CDH region. Individuals with RSV typically recover within one to two weeks, though infants and older adults have been known to experience serious cases.

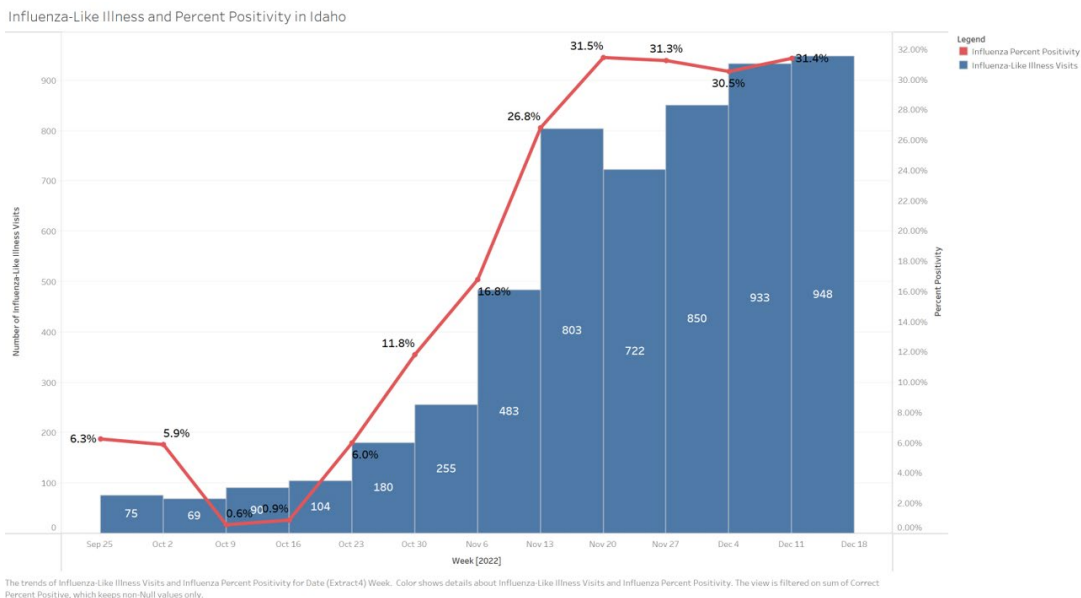
(Figure 2, attached as RSV.png)



Influenza

Seasonal influenza, predominantly Influenza A here in Idaho, continues to rise throughout the state to much higher case numbers than seen within the past decade at this time of year. Emergency departments statewide are seeing an increase in visits due to influenza-like illnesses (ILI), along with those being hospitalized from ILI.

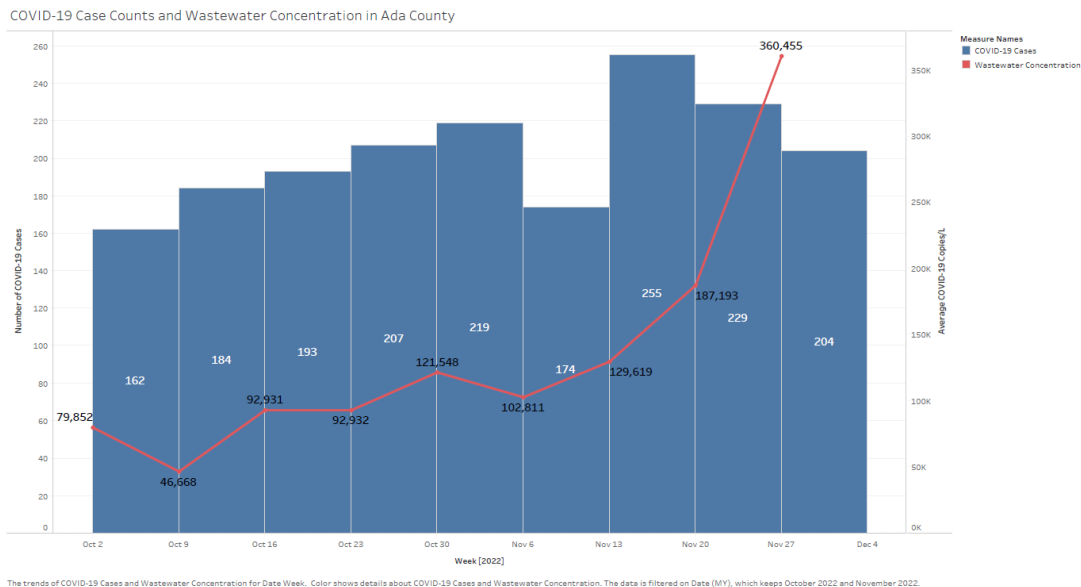
(Figure 3, attached as Influenza.png)



COVID-19

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID symptoms can resemble flu or cold-like symptoms, but some cases may be severe enough to lead to hospitalization or death. Regardless of symptom severity, some individuals may experience long COVID symptoms for months, possibly causing disability. COVID-related hospitalizations have increased this fall and winter.

(Figure 4, attached as COVID-19 Wastewater.png)



How to Reduce Your Risk of Severe Respiratory Illness

As we are in the season of larger gatherings and colder weather, CDH reminds the community that intervention strategies reduce the risk of severe illness. Here are some steps you can take to protect yourself and others when gathering this winter season:

- Remain home if you are feeling ill. Even mild symptoms could be flu, RSV, COVID, or something else.
 - Know where to get tested:
 - Contact your primary healthcare providers to inquire about multi-panel respiratory virus testing to identify flu, RSV, COVID, and others.
 - Free rapid COVID tests: www.covid.gov/tests or 1-800-232-0233
 - <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/find-covid-19-testing-locations>
 - Free Medicare tests: <https://www.medicare.gov/covid-19-tests-participating-pharmacies>
 - Most insurance companies will cover costs for some over the counter COVID tests. Contact your insurance provider for more information.
 - If you're ill and suspect COVID, flu, or RSV, please seek treatment sooner than later. Seeking care early is important because some treatments for viral illnesses are most effective within a specific timeframe. If patients wait too long to check on symptoms, their treatment options could be limited.
 - Know [where to find COVID treatments](#).

- [Have a plan](#) if you or a family member tests positive for COVID.
- Improve ventilation and indoor air quality in your home:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/Improving-Ventilation-Home.html>
 - <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/air-cleaners-hvac-filters-and-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, and sneezing. Avoid touching your face, but if you must, wash your hands before and after. Use hand sanitizer if washing is not readily available.
- [Know if you or a loved one is at high risk for severe illness.](#)
- Cover your nose and mouth anytime you cough or sneeze, either into your elbow/sleeve or into a tissue that is disposed of.
- Vaccinations (COVID or Influenza) are proven to be safe and effective in reducing illness and transmission.
- Consider [wearing a high-quality, well-fitting mask or respirator](#) when visiting crowded, indoor places for added protection or if you are visiting someone at increased risk for severe illness.

Resources:

CDC RSV:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>

IDHW RSV:

- <https://www.getthehealthy.dhw.idaho.gov/resp-synct>

IDHW Influenza:

- <https://www.getthehealthy.dhw.idaho.gov/infectious-disease-idaho>

CDH COVID Information:

- <https://cdh.idaho.gov/covid.php>

About Central District Health

CDH, Public Health District IV, is one of seven public health districts within the state of Idaho, serving the counties of Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley. With a vision of *Healthy People in Healthy Communities*, CDH's emphasis is on decreasing risk factors for chronic disease, improving quality of life and increasing the years of healthy life among residents.

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