

VACUNAS (VACCINES) UPDATE

National Alliance for Hispanic Health



RESPIRATORY VIRUS ACTIVITY REMAINS ELEVATED ACROSS THE U.S.



Respiratory virus activity is elevated across most areas of the U.S. The latest [CDC data](#) show that 25 jurisdictions experienced “high” or “very high” levels of respiratory illness, which is based on the percentage of outpatient visits that include fever plus a cough or sore throat. Emergency department (ED) visits with diagnosed flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) remain elevated, although all three conditions saw a slight decrease in ED visits according to the latest weekly data.

IN THIS ISSUE

**Respiratory Virus
Activity Remains
Elevated Across U.S.**

**New COVID-19 Variant JN.1
Has Become Dominant
Strain in the U.S.**

**CDC Encourages
Vaccination for
Nursing Home
Residents to Support
Respiratory Health**

**Vaccination for
Kindergartners Remained
Near 93% but Increase in
Exemptions from State-
Required Vaccination
Raises Concern**

NEW COVID-19 VARIANT JN.1 HAS BECOME DOMINANT STRAIN IN THE U.S.

[According to CDC data](#), the COVID-19 variant JN.1 has replaced HV.1 as the most prevalent coronavirus variant in the U.S. JN.1 is a descendant of the BA.2.86 strain within the Omicron family and has an additional mutation in its spike protein compared to its parent strain. [Health experts note](#) that even though JN.1 could be slightly more transmissible, there is no evidence that it causes more severe illness. The updated 2023-2024 monovalent COVID-19 vaccines are expected to be effective against JN.1 because it is within the same family of variants. Everyone six months and older can [stay up-to-date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines by receiving the newest monovalent vaccine which is now available in most pharmacies and clinical settings. The cost of the vaccine is covered by most insurance plans, and for those who are uninsured or whose insurance does not cover the full cost of the vaccine, COVID-19 vaccines are available at no cost through CDC's Bridge Access Program. Visit www.vacunashelp.org for more information and www.vaccines.gov or <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/> to find a COVID-19 and flu vaccine near you.

CDC ENCOURAGES VACCINATION FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS TO SUPPORT RESPIRATORY HEALTH

A [CDC report](#) documented that vaccination against COVID-19, flu, and RSV was low among nursing home residents, especially with respect to the new COVID-19 and RSV vaccines. As of December 10, 2023, 33.1% of nursing home residents were up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccination. Health experts note that nursing home residents are at higher risk of experiencing severe complications from COVID-19, flu, and RSV. The [CDC encourages](#) healthcare providers to protect nursing home residents against severe health outcomes by offering vaccination against COVID-19 and flu, and discussing RSV vaccination with eligible residents. Nursing homes are encouraged to collaborate with federal, state, and local health departments, as well as pharmacy partners to help address barriers contributing to low vaccination coverage.



VACCINATION FOR KINDERGARTNERS REMAINED NEAR 93% BUT INCREASE IN EXEMPTIONS FROM STATE-REQUIRED VACCINATION RAISES CONCERN

A [CDC report](#) showed that during the 2022-23 school year, nationwide vaccination coverage among kindergarten children remained near 93% for measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR), diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP), poliovirus vaccine (polio), and varicella vaccine (VAR). The overall percentage of kindergarten children with an exemption from one or more required vaccines increased from 2.6% during the 2021-22 school year to 3.0% during the 2022-23 school year, which was the highest exemption rate ever reported in the U.S.

[Health experts note](#) that although 93% vaccination coverage may seem high, some diseases, like measles, require 95% coverage to maintain herd immunity. Exemptions greater than 5% limit the level of achievable vaccination coverage and increase the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. This makes increases in exemptions a concern. Immunization programs, schools, and healthcare providers should prioritize strategies that ensure children are fully vaccinated before school entry or during provisional enrollment periods to reduce exemptions and increase vaccination coverage.



Vacunas para todos (Vaccines for All)[™] National Hispanic Network is funded in part by the Hispanic Family Equity Fund of the Healthy Americas Foundation and by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and by the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) under a grant to the National Council on Aging (NCOA). The contents of this newsletter are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by ACL, CDC, HHS, NCOA, or the U.S. Government.