# 2023-2024 Flu Season Report

HENRY COUNTY, OHIO

HENRY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## Introduction

The influenza season is a critical period for public health in our community, as it can lead to significant illness, hospitalizations, and even death. The purpose of this report is to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the flu season in Henry County, highlighting the trends and impacts within our community. This report covers the current 2023-2024 flu season, as well as comparisons with the previous season, Ohio, the Midwest region, and the United States. Finally, we will breakdown of the two flu types and their prevalence during the flu season in Henry County.

## Flu Surveillance Program

Since the 2012-2013 flu season, Henry County Health Department (HCHD) has been collecting flu data from primary care offices and Henry County Hospital. Data requested from these facilities consists of weekly totals of influenza-like illness (ILI), confirmed flu cases, type of influenza virus, hospitalizations, and deaths. Throughout the flu season this data is collected and monitored by HCHD communicable disease staff. This data is then used to inform public health outreach and education for the duration of the respiratory illness season.

## Key Takeaways

Hospitalizations increased by 66.7% from last flu season

**2.8x**

Reported cases of flu nearly tripled from last season

Two peaks in ILI were observed in Nov. and Feb.

# Henry County Flu Cases



## The 23-24 flu season saw nearly 3x as many reported cases than the previous year.

| | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024* | Trend |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reported Flu Cases** | 290 | **818** | ↑ |
| Type A | 287 | **373** | ↑ |
| Type B | 3 | **444** | ↑ |
| **Influenza-like Illness** | 266 | **731** | ↑ |
| **Associated Hospitalizations** | 12 | **20** | ↑ |
| **Associated Deaths** | 1 | **0** | ↓ |

**Source**: HCHD Influenza Surveillance Data 2022-2024

**Note**: Reported flu case totals may not reflect the total number of Type A and Type B as some cases were not classified prior to reporting.

* The availability of a combined flu and COVID rapid test which was approved by the FDA February 2023, along with enhancements to Henry County's flu surveillance program, may have resulted in increased flu figures for the 2023-2024 flu season.

Definitions:

**Influenza-like Illness (ILI)**: An illness with a fever (≥100°F) **AND** cough **AND/OR** sore throat
- Note- ILI does not necessarily indicate the illness is caused by influenza virus

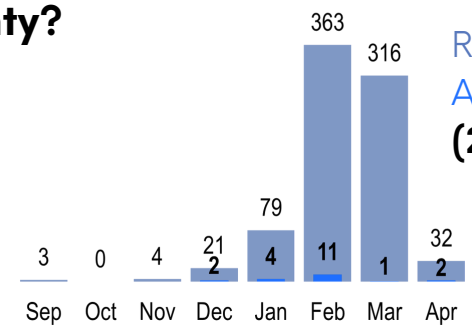
**Associated Hospitalization**: A hospitalization resulting from an influenza infection

**Associated Death**: A death resulting from an influenza infection

## How many flu cases were hospitalized in Henry County?

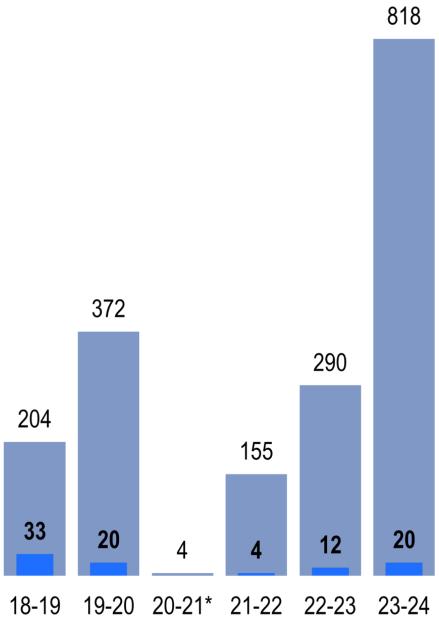
The number of reported flu cases peaked in February and March 2024, with the highest number of cases reported in February. The number of flu-associated hospitalizations followed a similar trend with February having the most hospitalizations. As the number of flu cases increased so did the number of flu-associated hospitalizations.

When comparing the 23-24 flu season to the past five, the number of hospitalizations seem to fall in a normal range. While the 23-24 season has seen an increase of 66.7% compared to last year, it falls within a normal range when compared to the 18-19 and 19-20 seasons.




Reported Flu Cases and Associated Hospitalizations **(2023-2024)**

**Source**: HCHD Influenza Surveillance 2023-2024



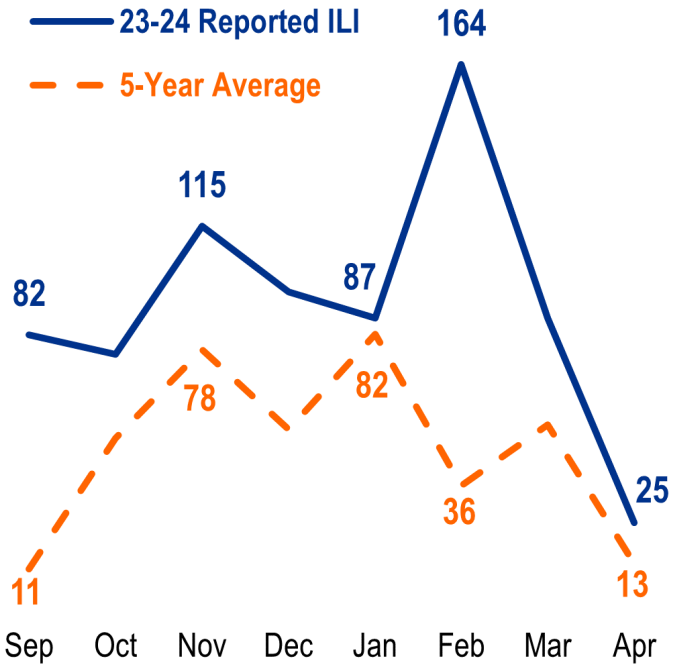

Reported Flu Cases and Associated Hospitalizations **(By Season)**

* Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, reported data for the 20-21 flu season was limited.

**Source**: HCHD Influenza Surveillance 2018-2024

# Influenza-Like Illness (ILI)

## How do this years' ILI numbers compare to the last 5 years?

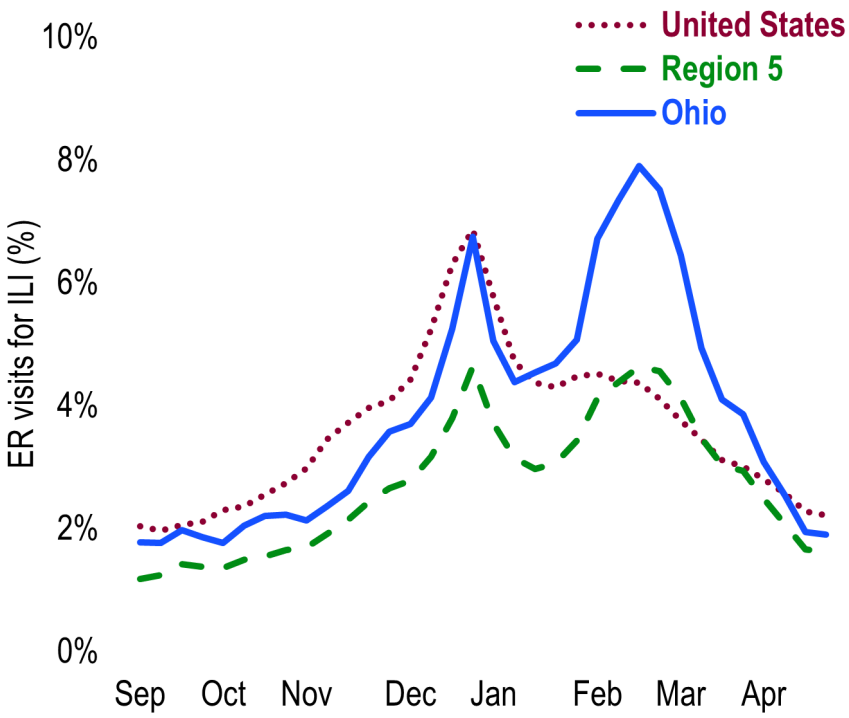



**Source**: HCHD Influenza Surveillance 2018-2024

Overall, the number of ILI reported during the 2023-2024 flu season was much higher than the average of the past five years in Henry County. This increase is likely because of two factors. The first being the introduction of a combined flu and COVID rapid test which has increased the efficiency of respiratory virus identification. The second reason being adjustments to Henry County's flu surveillance program including updating the report form, weekly reminders to providers, and offering electronic reporting options. Despite this increase, the pattern of ILI activity still followed the usual 5-year average trend, with expected peaks occurring October-November and January-February.

While HCHD receives ILI data from healthcare providers in Henry County, CDC monitors ILI numbers using data from emergency room medical records. Rather than the total number of ILI, CDC uses the percentage of ER visits resulting from ILI. As seen in the chart to the right, the first major peak in ILI for this flu season occurred around the start of the new year, reflecting a broader trend seen across the state, region, and the United States. Interestingly, a second larger peak was seen in Ohio and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) but not nationally. The initial peak was likely the result of a combined rise in both COVID-19 and flu cases between December and January. The second peak, driven solely by flu cases, was observed at the regional, state, and local levels in February and March.

## How did ILI look for Ohio, the Region, and the United States?



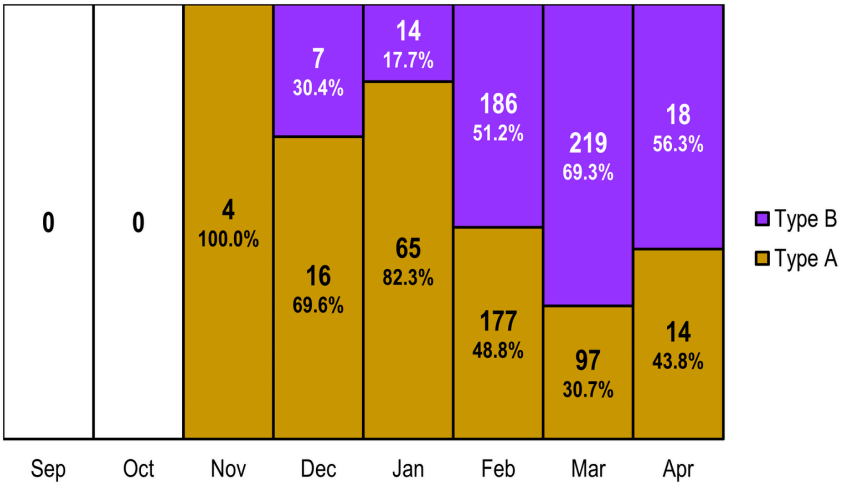

**Source**: CDC ILINet data retrieved June 24, 2024

# Influenza Type

## What are the types of Influenza virus?

There are two types of influenza virus observed each and every flu season: Influenza Type A and Influenza Type B. Influenza Type A tends to cause more severe illness, larger outbreaks, and even pandemics due to its ability to infect both humans and animals, leading to rapid mutations. Influenza Type B, typically milder, spreads slower, and primarily affects humans, especially children. When Type A is the dominant strain, there's a higher risk of severe illness and healthcare strain, while Type B tends to impact younger populations, particularly school-aged children. Understanding the dominant type helps guide public health response and prevention efforts.

## What was the dominant type of flu this season?




**Source**: HCHD Influenza Surveillance 2023-2024

The graph to the left shows the percentage of reported flu cases in Henry County by influenza virus type. The 2023-2024 season began with predominantly influenza type A cases. However, in February, there was a shift and influenza type B became more common. This change happened around the same time as the second peak in ILI was observed in Henry County, Ohio, and DHHS Region 5 as discussed on page 3. Unfortunately, there isn't state specific data detailing flu cases by type, making it difficult to determine if this peak was due to an increase in Type B alone or a combination of both Type A and Type B.

# Recommendations

Based on the data from the 2023-2024 flu season, it is recommended that all eligible individuals received the flu vaccine at any point during the flu season. It is never too late to get your flu shot. It is also important to note that vaccines for COVID-19 and RSV should also be considered, particularly for those at higher risk. These vaccines not only reduce the severity of illness but also help protect our community by limiting the spread of respiratory viruses.

Additionally, we encourage healthcare providers in Henry County to increase testing for both flu and COVID-19 during patient visits, especially between November and April. As was seen this past flu season, an increase of rapid flu testing availability in the county provided HCHD's flu surveillance program with an abundance of data. Further expansion in testing will provide more accurate data for our surveillance program, allowing us to better track the spread of these illnesses and respond more effectively to outbreaks. Early and frequent testing improves public health response and ensures that interventions are timely and targeted.