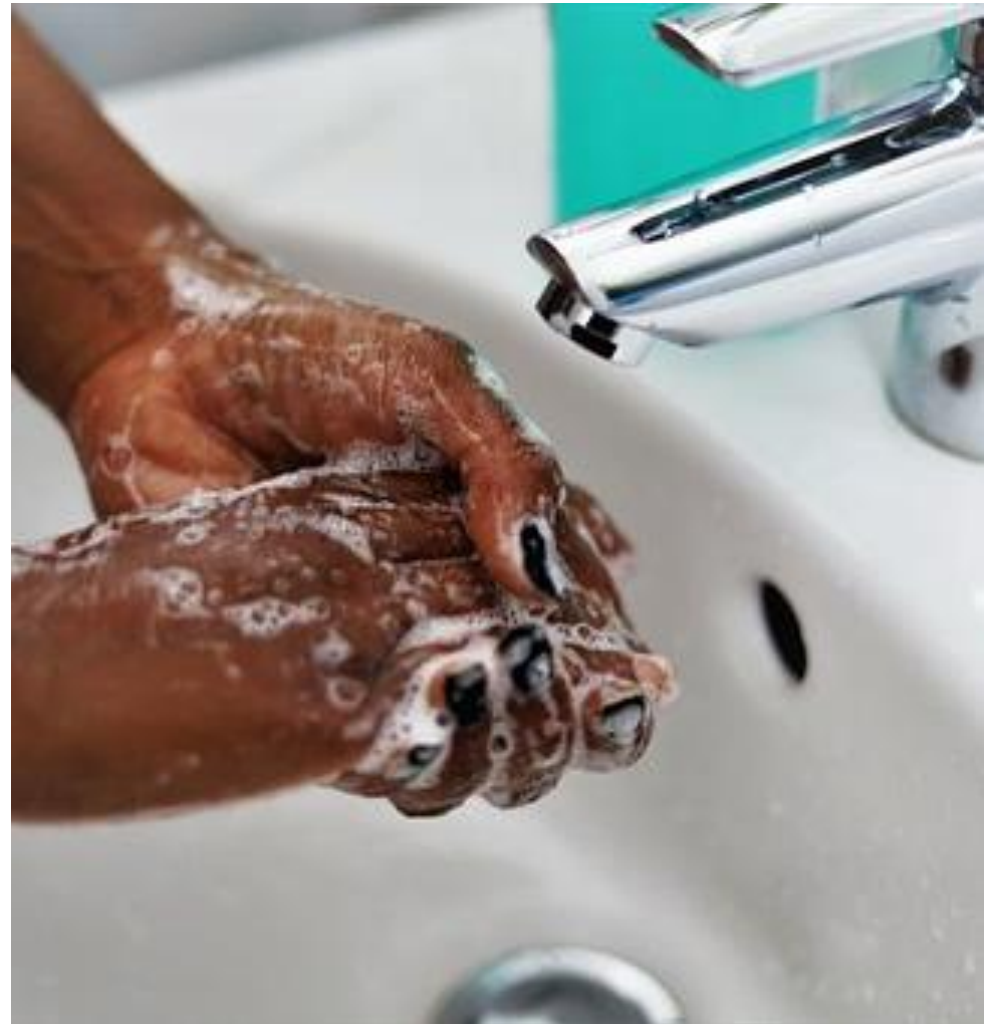


COVID-19 & Respiratory Diseases, 2023-2024

Vermont Department
of Health, Infectious
Disease
Epidemiology COVID-
19 program update.

September 7, 2023



COVID-19 & Respiratory Diseases, 2023-2024



What Has (and Hasn't) Changed Since Last Winter?



Current COVID-19 and respiratory picture



Guidance for 2023-2024 respiratory disease season



Questions

What Has Changed since Last Winter?

COVID-19 Community Levels have been replaced with Hospitalization Levels

- Operationally, impacted healthcare/nursing facilities only.
- Hospitalization Level remains valuable “rough estimate” of COVID-19 activity and impact.

Laboratories/providers are no longer required to report negative COVID-19 tests in Vermont.

Continued immunization- and infection-derived immunity.

Shift toward annual (for most individual) recommended vaccine, akin to flu.

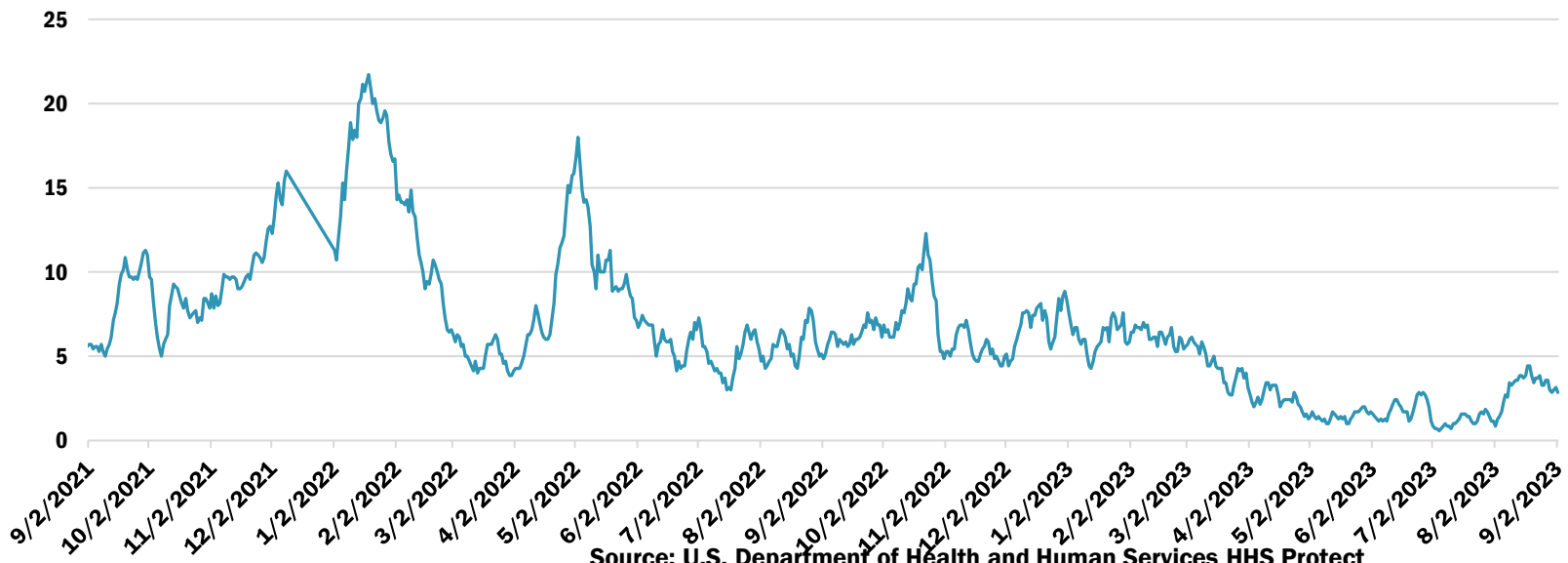
What Has (Not) Changed since Last Winter?

- Recommendations for infection control and prevention have not changed.
- Despite widespread interest in new variants, none of the recent variants have presented any need to change recommendations or otherwise introduced major changes.
- Like last respiratory disease season, COVID-19 will be coexisting with other, similarly presenting diseases.

Current Respiratory Picture

COVID-19 levels have remained low by standards of the pandemic, but we did observe a recent increase.

Daily Hospitalizations With COVID-19 Diagnosis Seven-Day Rolling Average



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services HHS Protect

Current Respiratory Picture

RSV has recently increased in the Southeastern US:

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is issuing this Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory to notify clinicians and caregivers about increases in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity across some parts of the Southeastern United States in recent weeks, suggesting a continued shift toward seasonal RSV trends observed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Historically, such regional increases have predicted the beginning of RSV season nationally, with increased RSV activity spreading north and west over the following 2–3 months. RSV can cause severe disease in infants, young children, and older adults.” (CDC Health Advisory, September 5, 2023)

Current Respiratory Picture

Flu activity is currently minimal but may again be higher this year.

Vermont's weekly flu surveillance reports will resume on October 13 on the flu activity and surveillance webpage: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/flu/flu-activity-and-surveillance>

Current Guidance for Childcare/Early Education



No change in COVID-19 guidance from last Spring:

- COVID-19 testing should not be required to send someone home or to attend.
- If a child or staff member has a fever or is otherwise too sick to participate in group care, they should be sent home.
- VDH does not have a “required isolation period.” Five days is a basic recommendation for COVID-19 isolation, but other factors can be considered.
 - Masking for those who can, ventilation, hygiene and spacing are tools to mitigate respiratory disease transmission.

Current Guidance for Childcare/Early Education



No change in COVID-19 guidance from last Spring:

- Around individuals who cannot mask, ventilation, spacing, masking (for those who can) are mitigation strategies.
 - Inability to mask, due to age or other condition, should generally not require a child to stay out longer.
- Staff and children with fever, sore throat, vomiting or diarrhea, or otherwise see no improvement in symptoms, should stay home.

Current Guidance for Childcare/Early Education



General guidance to reduce burden from COVID-19 and the seasonal respiratory diseases:

- Reinforce covering coughs and sneezes
- Reinforce hand-washing
- Clean surfaces at least once a day to reduce the risk of germs spreading
- Optimal ventilation and improved indoor air quality reduce the risk of airborne germs/contaminants
- Stay home when sick
- Stay up to date on yearly vaccinations, including COVID-19

Current Guidance for Childcare/Early Education

Childcare facilities are **not required to report** cases of COVID-19, flu, RSV, or other common viral respiratory illness, but are able to get support from the Health Department in these situations.

If a child or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19, and you would like guidance or assistance:

- You can contact your Local Health Office (preferred) with your contact information, or email AHS.VDHEPICOVID19Program@vermont.gov
- Please do not include names, dates of birth, or other identifying information for the child or staff member in your email.
- You can contact the Health Department's Infectious Disease Epidemiology team at: 802-863-7240 Option 2 (Mon-Fri 7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

Current Guidance for Childcare/Early Education

Childcare facilities are **not required to report** cases of COVID-19, flu, RSV, or other common viral respiratory illness, but are able to get support from the Health Department in these situations

Additional support for flu, RSV and other respiratory illness is also available.

- An updated one-page form to make one-time reporting easier will be online by mid-October at www.HealthVermont.gov/FluOutbreak along with updated reference materials.
- You can contact the Health Department's Infectious Disease Epidemiology team at: 802-863-7240 Option 2 (Mon-Fri 7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

2023 – 2024 COVID-19 Testing

There are no current plans for broad-based distribution of COVID-19 test kits to schools or childcares from the State. Families can check the CDC's [online search tool for finding no-cost COVID-19 testing](#) options in their area or call their health care provider.