

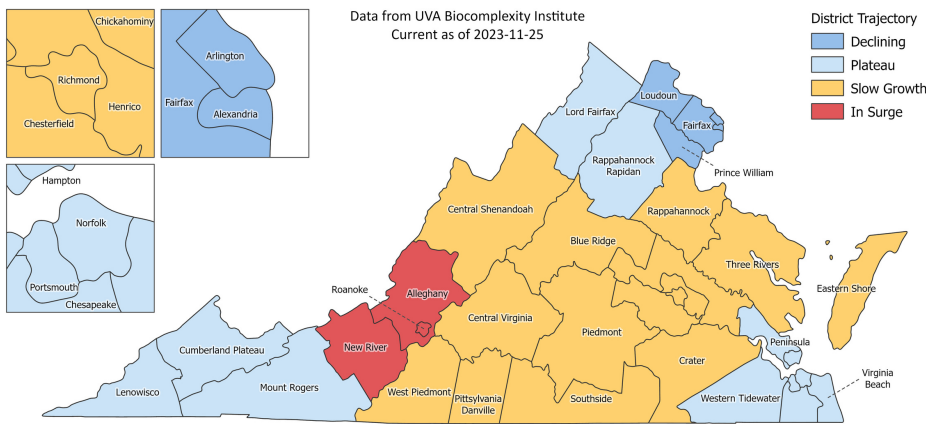
December 8, 2023

Key Takeaways

- COVID-19 metrics suggest continued growth in Virginia. ED diagnoses, wastewater levels, and hospitalizations are all up. Flu hospitalizations are also up in Virginia. CDC forecasts suggest hospitalizations for flu will continue to grow, while COVID-19 hospitalizations level off.
- The CDC expects this year’s respiratory illness season will be similar to last year’s. Hospital burden will depend on the timing of the RSV, flu, and COVID-19 peaks. Though local surges are possible, the CDC does not anticipate a major national surge like the Omicron Wave of 2021.
- The JN.1 (BA.2.86) subvariant is continuing to grow in the U.S.
- It is not too late to get a flu vaccine or the 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccine.
- New reports from COP28 outline the danger that climate change poses to human health if left unabated.
- China and Europe continue to report new cases of pneumonia caused by the pathogen *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*.

Key Figures

COVID-19 Hospitalization Rate Trajectories of Virginia Health Districts



Virginia Influenza Intensity Level

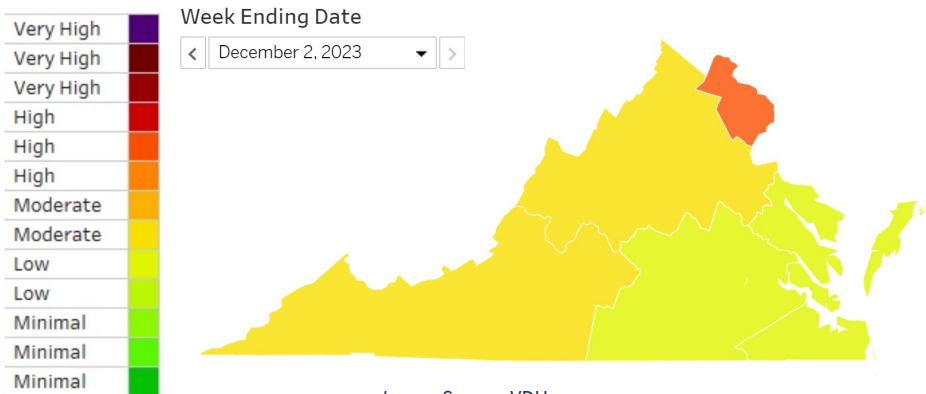


Image Source: [VDH](#)

COVID-19

Low

Characterization of COVID-19 hospital admissions and hospital occupancy in Virginia as of Nov 25.

Influenza

Moderate

Statewide influenza activity levels in Virginia, as of Dec 2.

1 of 5

Virginia regions with a High influenza intensity level, as of Dec 2. The rest are at Moderate or Low levels.

Crowd Forecasts

Week ending 12/24

The week in 2023 that will have the highest percent of medical visits for Influenza-like Illness in Virginia. (*Metaculus Forecast*)

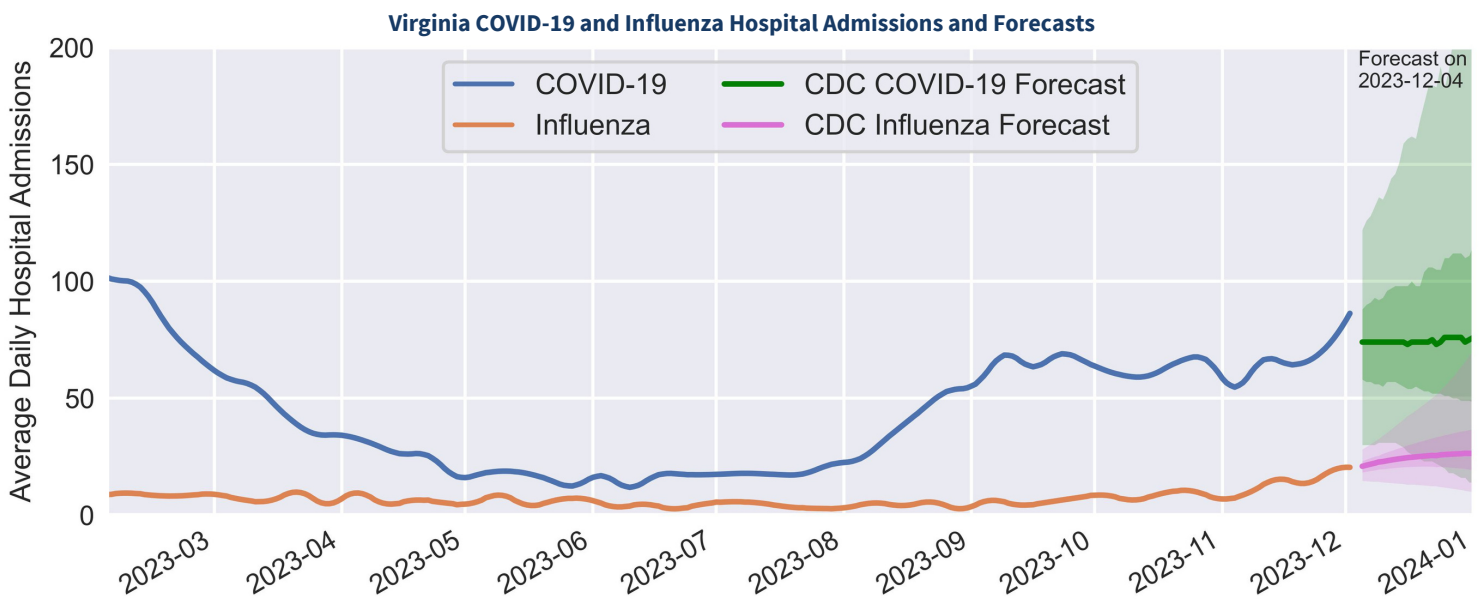
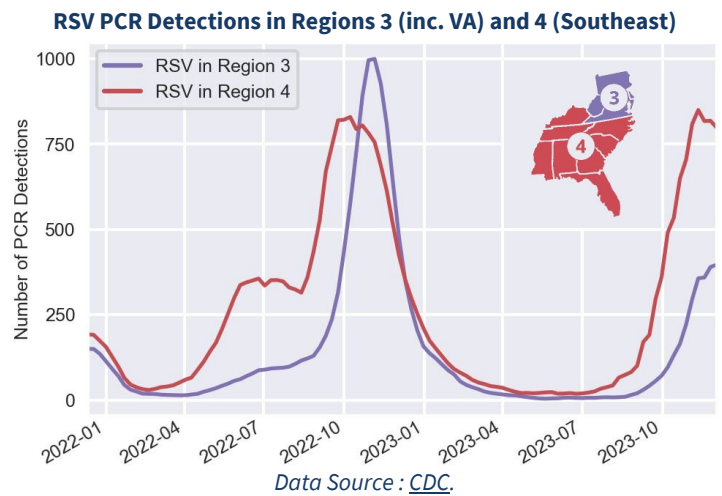
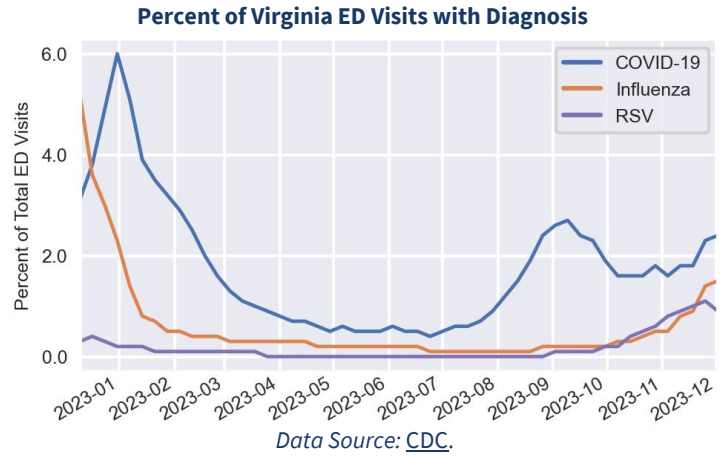
51.51%

The percentage of Virginian adults that will be vaccinated against Influenza by 2024. (*Metaculus Forecast*)

Spotlight:
Climate Change

Respiratory Illness

- **COVID-19 growth increases.** COVID-19 diagnoses at Emergency Departments are up 36% in the last two weeks. The statewide effective reproduction number (R_e) is around 1.1. Wastewater data suggests Virginia is experiencing a moderate viral activity level, though viral loads are on a rising trajectory.
- **Hospitalization rates are up for COVID-19 and flu.** COVID-19 hospitalizations have grown steadily for the last two weeks, but are still classified as “Low”. Flu hospitalizations have increased by 43% in that same time. CDC forecasts suggest that hospitalizations for flu will continue growing slowly, while those caused by COVID-19 will remain steady.
- **RSV growth may be slowing.** PCR detections of RSV in HHS Region 4 (Southeast) are down this week, and growth may be easing in Virginia. The CDC expects RSV to return to “normal seasonal patterns” this year.
- **CDC outlook suggests a repeat of last season.** Nationally, fall and winter hospitalizations will likely rival those of the same time last year.
- **Pediatric RSV vaccine shortage persists.** Physicians are encouraging pregnant women to get vaccinated, allowing them to save pediatric doses for newborns.
- **Physicians still recommend COVID-19 vaccination.** For those who have not received the 2023-24 vaccine, there is still time to get one before the winter waves.



Note that 50% and 95% confidence intervals for forecasts are shown as dark and light shading respectively.
 Historical data source: [HealthData.gov](#), COVID-19 forecast data source: [CDC CFA](#), flu forecast data source: [CDC FluSight](#).

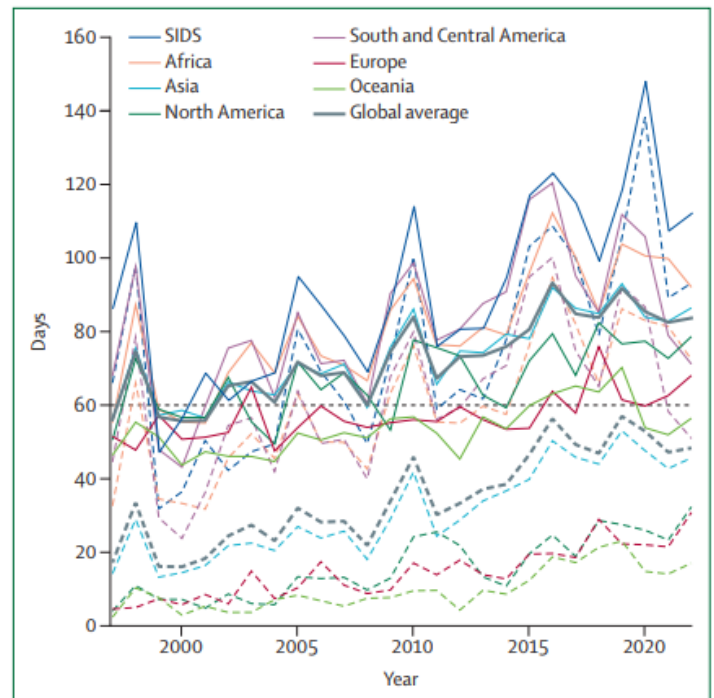
Spotlight

- **Several new reports** were released this week ahead of the global climate summit known as **COP28**, taking place in Dubai November 30 to December 12. In addition to reports from the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), the [World Economic Forum](#), the [Systems Change Lab](#), and the [U.S. government](#), the [Lancet Countdown on health and climate change](#) published its eighth report. Together, the reports warn in no uncertain terms, that rising temperatures are already impacting human health and, if left unabated, will have catastrophic consequences for human survival.
- **The 2023 Atlantic Hurricane season officially came to an end on November 30.** Although only Hurricane Idalia made landfall in the United States, record-high ocean temperatures contributed to a particularly active hurricane season, with 20 named storms over the course of this period, including seven categorized as hurricanes.

Other News

- **Recent increases in pneumonia outbreaks among children** have been reported in [Europe](#), Asia, and the United States (Ohio and Massachusetts). Pneumonia can be caused by a variety of viral and bacterial pathogens, including [Mycoplasma pneumoniae](#). VDH is closely monitoring healthcare visits and reported outbreaks of pneumonia in Virginia. So far, Virginia has seen an expected seasonal increase in cases of pneumonia, comparable to past respiratory seasons.
- **Over 60 cases of lead poisoning in children under six linked were to the consumption of applesauce pouches.** Over the last week, the number of reported cases increased from 57 to 64. The FDA is conducting an ongoing investigation and [has identified cinnamon](#) as a potential source of the contamination. Cases have been reported in 27 states, including Virginia.
- **Tuberculosis detected in North Carolina High School.** The Guildford County Department of Health and Human Services is offering testing and treatment to school staff and students but indicates there is minimal risk to local public health.

Climate Change



Globally, the number of days in which individuals were exposed to dangerously high temperatures has increased since 2000.
Image Source: [The Lancet Countdown](#)

- **Gun violence across the US continues to threaten public safety.** In the midst of a rise in hate crimes, [three Palestinian students](#) were shot near the University of Vermont last month. Earlier this week, a shooting on the [University of Nevada – Las Vegas](#) campus left three people dead and one in critical condition.
- **Mask production declines as the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic fades.** Two of the major mask production companies, [Project N95](#) and [Maskc](#), will conclude operations and close out at the end of the year. Mask mandates have been lifted in many settings, reducing the demand for personal protective equipment.
- **Home explosion that occurred during search warrant in Arlington, VA under FBI investigation.** Residents of the community where the explosion occurred were evacuated prior to the incident, but ten additional households were evacuated as a result of the blast. The suspect was caught in the blast and is presumed to be deceased.