

February 23, 2024

## Key Takeaways

- Statewide influenza activity has increased for the second week in a row. Viral activity also increased in three of Virginia’s five planning regions.
- COVID-19 rates remain elevated in the Commonwealth but continue to decrease slowly. Wastewater data suggests the possibility of national COVID-19 growth.
- Respiratory illness hospitalizations have increased this week. Yet, admissions rates and bed occupancy for COVID-19 remain “low”. Models expect hospital admissions for both flu and COVID-19 to stabilize.
- New outbreaks of measles continue to emerge across the nation.
- Officials in West Virginia report a case of avian flu in a backyard poultry flock. The USDA and WVDA are currently investigating the case.
- An explosion in Loudoun County has killed a first responder.
- Healthcare workers continue to exhibit high burnout rates nationwide.

## Key Figures

### COVID-19

#### Low / Low

Characterization of statewide COVID-19 related hospital admissions / hospital bed occupancy as of Feb 17.

#### 0% / 16%

Population in localities with “High” / “Medium” COVID-19 hospital admissions levels as of Feb 17.

### Influenza

#### High

Statewide influenza activity levels in Virginia, as of Feb 17.

#### 3 of 5

Virginia regions with High influenza intensity levels, as of Feb 17.

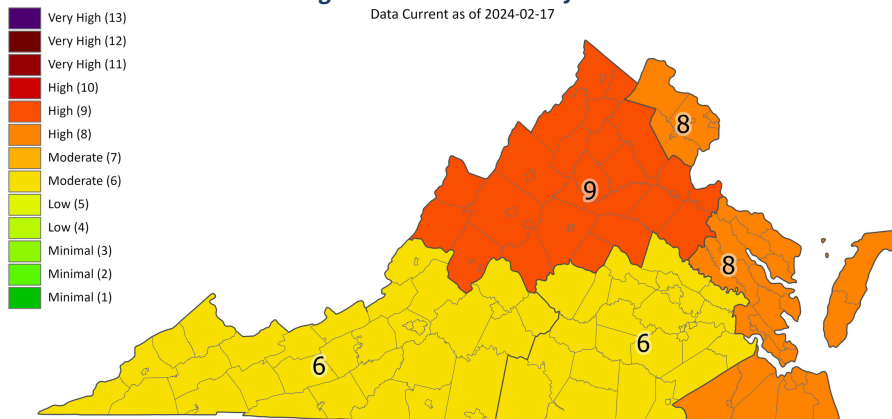
### Dengue Virus

#### 673,267

The number of dengue cases in in the Americas during the first five weeks of 2024. This number is 225% higher than the five-year average.

**Virginia Influenza Intensity Level**

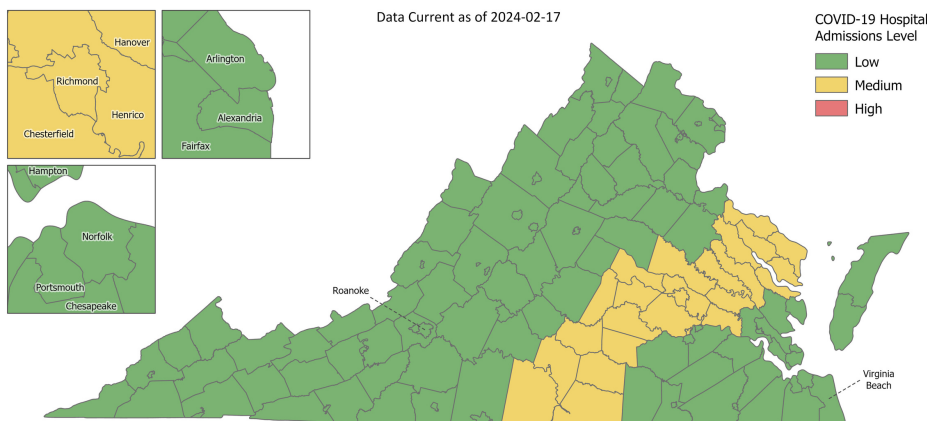
Data Current as of 2024-02-17



Data Source: [VDH](#).

**Virginia COVID-19 Hospital Admissions Level**

Data Current as of 2024-02-17

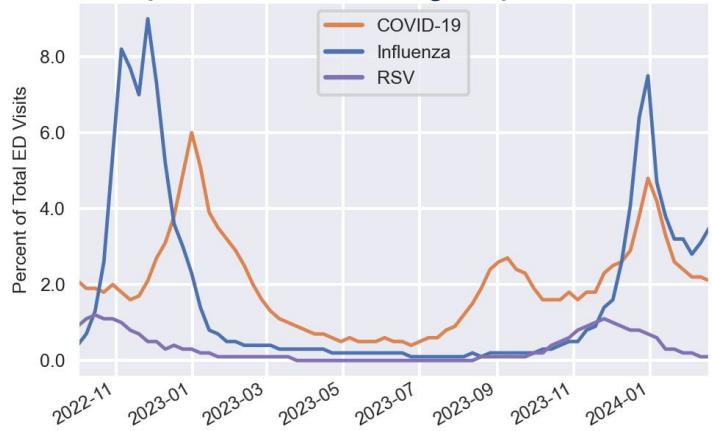


Data Source: [CDC](#).

## Seasonal Illness

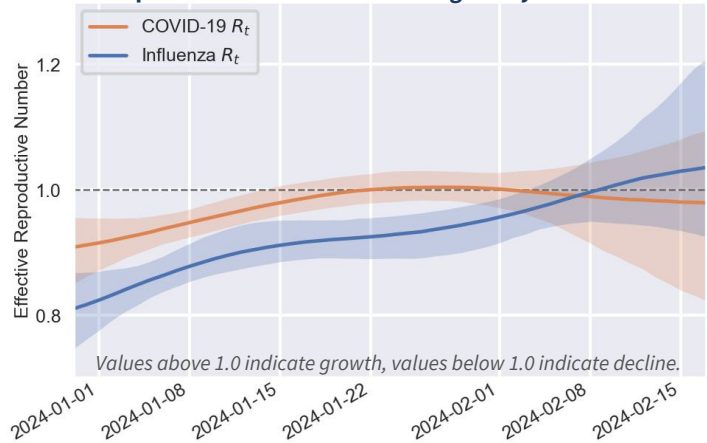
- **Influenza activity increases in Virginia.** Emergency Department (ED) diagnoses of influenza in Virginia have increased for the second week in the row. The statewide flu intensity level is still “high”, and has increased in three of the five regions. Modeling from the CFA suggests that there is a 73.3% chance that Influenza is growing in Virginia.
- **COVID-19 activity remains high but has stabilized.** ED diagnoses of COVID-19 decreased slightly again this week, continuing a seven-week trend. Modeling from the CFA suggests Virginia’s COVID-19 trends are stable. However, statewide wastewater viral activity is still considered “Very High” by CDC metrics. Data from BioBot suggests that national wastewater levels may be increasing.
- **Hospital admissions increase slightly.** Flu and COVID-19 admissions increased this week by 12% and 5% respectively. CDC ensemble models suggest that hospital admissions for both viruses should stabilize and remain static through mid-March.
- **RSV rates continue to decrease.** ED diagnoses of RSV in Virginia have steadily fallen since November 2023. Statewide diagnoses rates are now about 0.1%.
- **COVID-19 variant proportions evolve as expected.** JN.1 now accounts for an estimated 97% of new COVID-19 cases in HHS region 3 (includes Virginia). Testing has not yet identified any cases caused by the BA.2.87.1 variant in the United States.

**Weekly Percent of ED Visits in Virginia by Viral Illness**



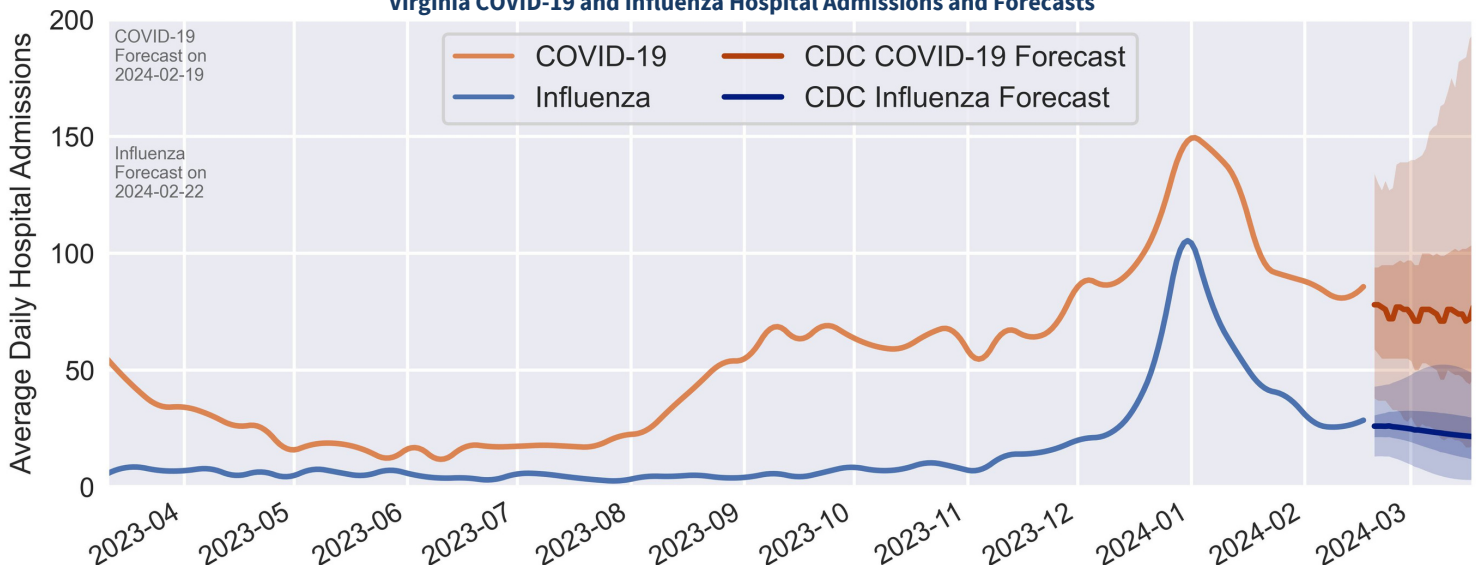
Flu diagnoses in the ED increased again this week. Data Source: [CDC](#).

**Epidemic Growth Status for Virginia by Virus**



Values above 1.0 indicate growth, values below 1.0 indicate decline. CFA  $R_t$  estimates suggest Influenza may be growing. Note that the 95% estimate confidence intervals are shown as shading. Data Source: [CDC](#).

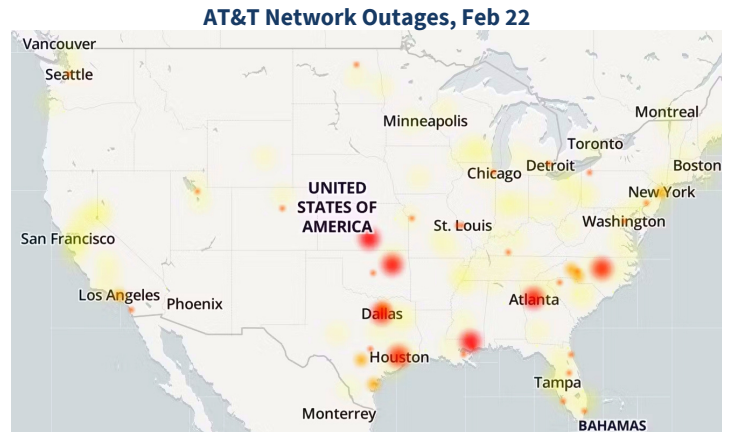
**Virginia COVID-19 and Influenza Hospital Admissions and Forecasts**



Models suggest a stabilization of hospitalizations for both flu and COVID-19. Note, 50% and 95% forecast confidence intervals are shown as shading. Historical data source: [HealthData.gov](#), COVID-19 forecast data source: [CDC CFA](#), flu forecast data source: [CDC FluSight](#).

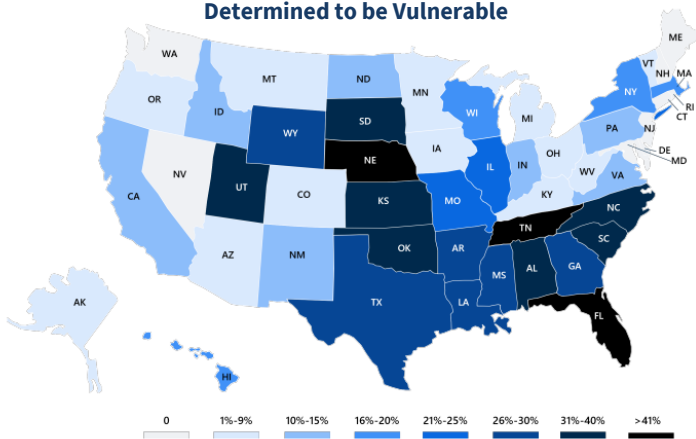
**Other News**

- **A home explosion in Loudoun County left one first responder dead and eleven injured.** Two civilians were injured as well. The explosion was caused by a leaky underground propane tank. Sterling Volunteer Fire Company Firefighter Trevor Brown was killed in the line of duty while investigating the leak.
- **Measles cases continue to be reported across the country.** Most recently, six cases have been reported at an elementary school in Broward County, Florida, where 92% of the district's students are vaccinated. Ohio has also reported a second case this year, and Spokane County, Washington reported infection in a local resident.



*AT&T network outages impacted emergency services across the country, disrupting 911 services in several areas, including Prince William County, Va, for several hours on Feb 22. Major cities reported the highest number of outages. Over 2,000 outages were reported in Houston as of 8:30 AM on February 22, while New York reported around 1,300. Image Source: [Downdetector](#)*

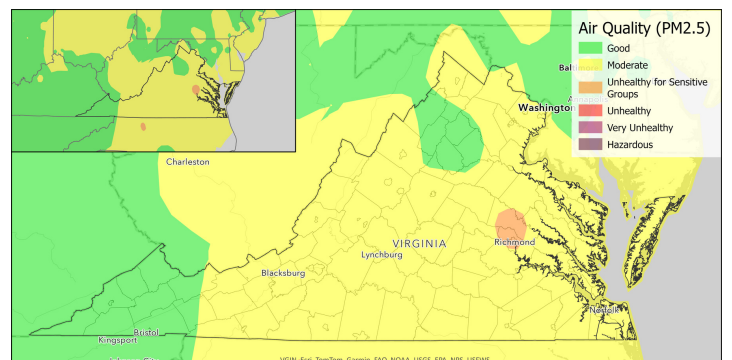
**Percentage of State Rural Hospitals Determined to be Vulnerable**



*In a recent report, a vulnerability model assessing several indicators was used to predict rural hospital closure. Over 400, or almost 20% of the nation's rural hospitals, are at risk of closure, with almost 25% no longer offering obstetric services. Thirty rural facilities nationwide have closed since 2020. According to the report, 10%-15% of Virginia's rural hospitals are vulnerable. Image Source: [Chartis](#).*

- **Case of avian flu reported in a backyard flock in West Virginia.** While Avian flu has been previously detected in two wild birds in West Virginia, this is the first case associated with a domestic bird.
- **Over 670,000 cases of dengue fever have already been reported in the Americas during the first five epidemiological weeks of 2024.** Of these cases, 700 were considered severe and 102 were fatal. The region reports 80% of the world's cases, and in 2023 reported the highest number of dengue cases in recent decades according to PAHO. Virginia does not have endemic dengue transmission, but traveler-acquired cases have been reported.

- **Four cases and two deaths associated with MERS-CoV infections in Saudi Arabia.** All four cases were reported to the WHO between August 2023 and February 2024. While the WHO did not change its overall risk assessment as a result of these cases, additional cases are anticipated from the region.
- **Over 40% of U.S. healthcare workers reported experiencing frequent burnout in 2022,** according to a November 2023 MMWR. The study also found that healthcare workers suffered from an increase in the number of poor mental health days from 3.3 days in 2018 to 4.5 days in 2022, and faced more workplace harassment, increasing from 6.4% to 13.4% between 2018 and 2022.



*Wildfires from North Carolina have caused an increase in particulate matter pollution in Virginia. The smoke had blanketed major metro areas like Charlotte, NC, but has mostly dissipated. Only a few areas of Virginia experienced hazardous levels of smoke density. Data Source: [AirNow.gov](#), updated 2024-02-23 at 1:00 PM.*