



# Department of Public Health



**MAYOR**  
Oscar Leeser

## **HEALTH ALERT**

**DATE:** November 23, 2022

**CITY COUNCIL**

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Peter Svarzbein

**District 2**  
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**CITY MANAGER**  
Tommy Gonzalez

## **Respiratory Viral Infections Affecting Children Causing Strain in Healthcare System Capacity**

This alert is posted on the City of El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH) website found at [www.ephealth.com](http://www.ephealth.com)

### **Background Information:**

Across the country, state, and locally a sharp rise, higher than expected incidence of respiratory illness, especially among children, caused by several respiratory viruses has been reported, causing a strain on acute-care healthcare systems. Locally staffed pediatric beds are at 100% capacity.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is responsible for most pediatric hospital admissions nationwide, state, and locally. RSV-net is reporting a four-fold increase in hospital admissions due to RSV from the middle of October 2022 to the present, with infants 0-6 months the demographic accounting for the most significant percentage of these admissions.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the percentage of outpatient visits due to Influenza Like Illness has more than doubled its percentage from the established baseline and risen 6 weeks earlier than in previous years. The demographic group most affected are children 0-4 years of age.

New influenza hospital admissions have tripled in just 3 weeks, and from the U.S. Virologic Surveillance the majority of the viruses identified were Influenza A H3N2 as the predominant strain across the state and country; however, Influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 has been increasing in the past week.

### **Actions Requested from Medical Providers:**

- Identify and refer all eligible high-risk children for Palivizumab (Synagis®) treatment in accordance with AAP guidelines to prevent RSV-associated hospitalizations.
- Become familiar about the indications and contraindications of the influenza virus vaccine. Offer and make available vaccination against influenza to all eligible people aged 6 months and older.

**Hector I. Ocaranza, MD, - Interim Director/Health Authority**  
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O: (915) 212-0200 | [ephealth.com](http://ephealth.com)





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- Strongly recommend all your patient stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination, including the recently approved SARS-CoV-2 bivalent mRNA booster dose for use in patients 5 years of age and older which confer protection against both the ancestral SARS-CoV-2 virus and the current predominant Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants responsible for COVID-19.
- For outpatients and inpatients with suspected or confirmed influenza virus infection, strongly consider prescribing any of the approved influenza antivirals (oral oseltamivir, inhaled zanamivir, intravenous peramivir, or oral baloxavir) as early as possible, depending upon approved age groups and contraindications.
- Providers are encouraged to participate/enroll in the Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet)  
<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/IDCU/disease/influenza/Sentinel-Provider-Surveillance.doc>
- Educate parents about warning signs of respiratory diseases and when to seek immediate medical attention at the Emergency Department. Also, educate parents about when NOT to go to the Emergency Department.

## RESOURCES:

### Respiratory Syncytial Virus

<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/clinical/index.html>

[Updated Guidance: Use of Palivizumab Prophylaxis to Prevent Hospitalization From Severe Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection During the 2022-2023 RSV Season \(aap.org\)](https://www.aap.org/clinical-guidance/updated-guidance-use-of-palivizumab-prophylaxis-to-prevent-hospitalization-from-severe-respiratory-syncytial-virus-infection-during-the-2022-2023-rsv-season)

<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2014-1665>

<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/research/rsv-net/dashboard.html>

### Influenza (Flu)

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>

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