

PRESS RELEASE

Health Advisory

March 31, 2025



Whitman County
Public Health

Alert Categories



Health Alert

Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.



Health Advisory

Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.



Health Update

Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First reported flu death for Whitman County's 2024–2025 flu season

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following:

Whitman County Public Health

Disease Prevention Program, DiseasePrevention@whitmancounty.gov

Summary

The flu virus claimed the life of one Whitman County resident – Whitman County's first flu-related death this season, according to Whitman County Public Health. Unfortunately, this is a sad example of how serious the flu can be. Our thoughts are with the family during this difficult time. As flu cases surge, we encourage the public to take steps to protect themselves and their loved ones from the flu. It is not too late to get vaccinated.

The U.S. is experiencing its most intense flu season in the last 15 years, with flu deaths surpassing COVID-19 deaths for the first time since the pandemic began in 2019. During the 2023–2024 flu season, there were a total of 134 flu-related deaths in Washington State as reported by the Washington State Department of Health. So far this season, Washington State has seen 357 flu-related deaths. In Whitman County, flu rates continue to be elevated above the threshold for high disease activity.

What is the Flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Some people, such as those over the age of 65, young children, pregnant women, American Indian/Alaska Natives and those with certain health conditions, are at a higher risk for serious complications.

Flu Symptoms

People infected with the flu often have mild symptoms and can manage symptoms on their own at home.

People who have the flu may feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever (usually $\geq 101^{\circ}\text{F}$) or chills
- Headaches
- Cough
- Muscle or body aches
- Sore Throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Extreme Fatigue (tiredness)

In rare cases, individuals may develop serious complications with severe symptoms.

Emergency symptoms may include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Ongoing dizziness
- Seizures
- Worsening of existing medical conditions
- Severe weakness or muscle pain

In children, bluish or pale lips, skin, or nail beds and dehydration are considered emergency symptoms.

If you experience emergency symptoms of the flu, seek medical care right away.

How the Flu Spreads

Flu viruses mainly spread from person to person by droplets. This happens when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are sent through the air and land on the mouth, nose, or eyes of people nearby. Flu viruses may also spread when a person touches droplets on an object or surface and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes before washing their hands.

Prevent the Spread of Flu

There are many actions you can take to prevent the spread of the flu:

- Get immunized every year. It is the single best way to reduce flu illness and severe complications from the flu.
 - It is recommended that all people six months of age or older get a flu immunization.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. Also, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands after disposing of used tissues. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or sanitizers may be used.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are frequently spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about antiviral medications for the flu to help shorten the length of your illness and prevent more serious problems.

Resources



Click the link(s) below to learn more about the flu:

- [Flu Activity Levels in Whitman County](#)
- [Flu Fact Sheet](#)