

Seasonal Flu

GLOBAL SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SNAPSHOT

27 SEPTEMBER 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countries in the Northern Hemisphere are likely to experience an increase in seasonal flu activity between December 2022 and February 2023 after two years of mild cases.

- Health experts utilize flu patterns from the Southern Hemisphere, particularly Australia, as an indicator of what to expect in the Northern Hemisphere winter. Australia's 2022 winter flu season is considered the worst of the past five years.
- Using data from the Southern Hemisphere, experts forecast an aggressive flu season in the Northern Hemisphere winter. During the previous two flu seasons, pandemic measures helped curb the spread of COVID-19 and flu. Inversely, COVID-19 containment efforts limited flu exposure in younger children, leading to higher infection levels this year. Waning immunity and a relaxation of COVID-19 containment efforts suggest the Northern Hemisphere season could follow the trend and lead to severe infections. Some countries, including Germany, plan to reintroduce COVID-19 measures in anticipation of worsening conditions.

IMPACT AND MITIGATION

Health authorities can not predict with certainty the timing or severity of seasonal flu, making planning and preparation critical to mitigating the impact, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Some experts believe Australia's surge in flu cases in June and July 2022 was partly a result of health professionals being unprepared for the early start of the season. In the United States, some states, including New Mexico, Georgia, and Texas, have already reported flu cases, much earlier than the usual timeframe of between October and March. This suggests flu in the United States (and probably most of the Northern Hemisphere) is likely to emerge early and follow a similar infection trajectory.

Efforts to mitigate seasonal flu in the north typically start in September, while CDC surveillance is a year-round process. While CDC data show flu infections are below levels recorded in the 2020-21 inter-seasonal period, recent UK Health Security Agency data show flu levels in Europe are 'well above' previous levels for the same period. In response, European countries will soon roll out fall and winter vaccination campaigns to minimize flu and COVID-19 case severity.



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORT

In 2022, the World Health Organization reported an increase in flu activity in parts of the Southern Hemisphere, particularly in Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The season started two months earlier than usual, with cases in Australia three times higher than the annual average as recorded before the pandemic.



CONGRUENT FLU AND COVID

Experts voiced concern over congruent flu and COVID-19 cases in the 2021-22 season. Containment measures during the pandemic likely prevented the "twindemic" from materializing. Preventative measures are no longer in place in many parts of the Northern Hemisphere, making communities this year more vulnerable to circulating viruses.



IMPACT ON AIRBNB

Proactive internal messaging around the benefits of flu vaccination can help reduce the risk to AirFam in the upcoming flu season. The World Health Organization advise that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent the disease. Preventative vaccination is especially important for high risk patients, including children, elderly people, and women who are pregnant.