State of Alaska Epidemiology **Bulletin**

Department of Health
Heidi Hedberg, Commissioner
Robert Lawrence, MD, MA, CMO

3601 C Street, Suite 540
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Division of Public Health
Lindsey Kato, MPH, Director

https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi
24 Hour Emergency (800) 478-0084
Local (907) 269-8000

Editors:
Joe McLaughlin, MD, MPH
Louisa Castrodale, DVM, MPH

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COVID-19 2025–26 Season Summary

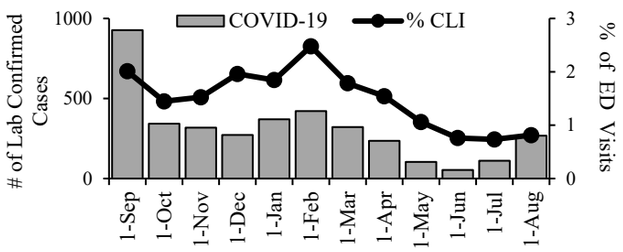
Background

The Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) conducts year-round surveillance for COVID-19, with enhanced surveillance from October–May to track virus activity, morbidity, and mortality. Weekly reports are published during this period through the *Respiratory Virus Snapshot* and transition to monthly updates thereafter.[1] This *Bulletin* summarizes COVID-19 activity from September 1, 2025, through August 31, 2026.

Alaska 2025–2026 COVID-19 Trends

During the 2025–2026 COVID-19 season, fewer COVID-19 cases were reported in Alaska than during the 2023–24 and the 2024–25 seasons. Case counts steadily decreased from February 2026 to June 2026 before increasing through August 2026 (Figure). This pattern resembled national COVID-19 trends.[2]

Figure. COVID-19 Cases Detected through Laboratory Reporting and Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance Data — Alaska, September 2025 – August 2026



Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance

Syndromic surveillance tracks COVID-like illness (CLI) using pooled emergency department data from participating Alaska facilities. CLI is defined as fever (≥100°F) with cough or shortness of breath/difficulty breathing in patients without influenza, with or without a COVID-19 diagnosis code. Unlike lab-based surveillance, syndromic surveillance relies on keyword searches and diagnosis codes to identify trends. While less specific than lab reporting, both systems generally align (Figure). More details are available in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) respiratory virus data.[3]

COVID-19 Deaths

During the 2025–2026 season, there were 22 Alaska residents with death certificates where COVID-19 was listed as a contributing or underlying cause of death. This included one pediatric death.

Wastewater Monitoring

Wastewater monitoring (WWM) can signal increasing COVID-19 activity and help identify community-level SARS-CoV-2 trends. Alaska SARS-CoV-2 wastewater data are available through the WastewaterSCAN dashboard for Anchorage and the Alaska Wastewater Monitoring Dashboard, maintained by the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), for participating communities statewide.

Return to Work Criteria for Healthcare Personnel (HCP) with COVID-19

Follow updated guidance for the management of HCP exposed to or infected with viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19. The September 2026 guidance applies to HCP with a suspected or confirmed viral respiratory infection (not otherwise addressed in earlier CDC guidance) and describes restriction and return to work criteria and timing, including source control recommendations.

2026–2027 COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance

COVID vaccines for the 2026–2027 season target the JN.1-lineage XFG, an Omicron subvariant.[4] Professional organizations issue specific recommendations for the COVID-19 vaccine, including the following:

- The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends all adults ages 19 and older receive a 2026–2027 COVID-19 vaccine.[5] Adults 65 years and older should receive two doses of the 2026–2027 COVID-19 vaccine, separated by at least 6 months.[5]
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends one dose of 2026–2027 COVID-19 vaccine for all infants aged 6–23 months and older children with high-risk conditions, who are in close contact with others with risk factors, or whose parents choose to vaccinate.[6] A second dose of COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for moderately or severely immunosuppressed children.[6]
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends one dose of COVID-19 vaccine for those who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, or postpartum.[7]

COVID-19 Vaccine Availability

The following products are available for the 2026–2027 season: Nuvaxovid™ (Novavax/Sanofi) for ages ≥12 years; Spikevax® (Moderna) for ages ≥6 months; mNexspike® (Moderna) for ages ≥12 years; and Comirnaty® (Pfizer) for ages ≥5 years. These vaccines are available at many pharmacies statewide. Ordering through Vaccines for Children or the Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program will open following CDC guidance.

Pemgarda

Pemgarda™ (pemivibart) is a monoclonal antibody authorized for pre-exposure prevention of COVID-19 in certain moderately to severely immunocompromised people who are unlikely to mount an adequate immune response to vaccination.

Recommendations

1. Clinicians should recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all eligible patients aged ≥6 months, especially considering those who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 infection. Guidance for outpatient clinical treatment of COVID-19 is available on the CDC website.
2. Health care facilities caring for patients at high risk for COVID-19 complications should encourage COVID-19 vaccination for staff with patient contact.
3. Clinicians may submit respiratory specimens from patients with CLI to the Alaska State Virology Laboratory for respiratory pathogen testing. Free supplies are available at 907-371-1000. Laboratory request forms are available on the Alaska Division of Public Health (DPH) website.
4. Laboratories must report all positive COVID-19 test results, including rapid test results, to SOE per 7 AAC 27.007.
5. Health care providers must report unusual clusters of respiratory illness to SOE: call 907-269-8000 during business hours, or 800-478-0084 after hours.
6. Skilled nursing facilities must report COVID-19 outbreaks using the associated SOE report form. An outbreak response guide for many health care settings is available on the DPH website.

References

1. Alaska Department of Health. Respiratory Virus Snapshot.
2. CDC. Respiratory Illness Data Channel.
3. CDC. People Most Impacted by Respiratory Viruses.
4. FDA. COVID-19 Vaccines (2026-2027 Formula) for Use in the United States Beginning in Fall 2026.
5. AAFP. 2026-2027 influenza, RSV, and SARS-CoV-2 immunization recommendations.
6. AAP. Recommendations for COVID-19 Vaccines in Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 2026-2027: Policy Statement. Updated September 2, 2026.
7. ACOG. COVID-19 Vaccination Considerations for OBGYN Care. Updated August 2026.

(Contributed by: Luke Pickerill, MPH, and Sarah Aho, MPH, Section of Epidemiology.)