

## US Flu Season Still Worsening; Now As Bad As 2009 Swine Flu

BY MIKE STOBBE  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK (AP) — The flu has further tightened its grip on the U.S. This season is now as bad as the swine flu epidemic nine years ago.

A government report out Friday shows 1 of every 13 visits to the doctor the previous week was for fever, cough and other symptoms of the flu. That ties the highest level seen in the U.S. during swine flu in 2009.

And it surpasses every winter flu season since 2003, when the government changed the way it measures flu.

This season started early and has been driven by a nasty type of flu that tends to put more people in the hospital and cause more deaths than other more common flu bugs.

But its long-lasting intensity has surprised experts, who are still sorting out why it's been so bad. Flu usually peaks in February.

Some doctors say this is the worst flu season they've seen in decades. Some people are saying that, too.

Veda Albertson, a 70-year-old retiree in Tampa, was sick for three weeks with high fever and fluid in her lungs. She said she hadn't been this sick from the flu since the 1960s, when she was a young mother who couldn't get out of bed to go to the crib of her crying baby.

"It was like 'Wham!' It was bad. It was

awful," she said of the illness that hit her on Christmas Day.

Heather Jossi, a 40-year-old Denver police officer and avid runner, said her illness last month was the worst flu she's experienced.

"I don't remember aches this bad. Not for four days," said Jossi. "It took me out."

Last week, 43 states had high patient traffic for the flu, up from 42, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. Flu remained widespread in every state except Hawaii and Oregon and hospitalizations continued to climb.

So far, however, deaths this season from the flu and flu-related pneumonia have lagged a little behind some recent bad seasons. There are as many as 56,000 deaths connected to the flu during a bad year.

The CDC said the amount of suspected flu cases at doctor office and hospitals last week matched that seen in 2009, when a new swine flu epidemic swept the country and panicked many people. Swine flu, also called pandemic H1N1, was a new strain that hadn't been seen before. It first hit that spring, at the tail end of the winter season, but doctor visits hit their height in late October.

This flu season, hospitalization rates have surpassed the nasty season of the winter of 2014-2015, when the vaccine was a poor match to the main bug.

Health officials have said this year's vaccine targets the flu viruses that are



AP PHOTO/DAVID GOLDMAN

In this Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2018 file photo, a nurse prepares a flu shot at the Salvation Army in Atlanta. The U.S. government's Friday, Feb. 9, 2018 flu report showed the flu has further tightened its grip on the U.S. This season is now as intense as the swine flu epidemic nine years ago.

currently making people sick. However, preliminary studies out of Australia and Canada have found the shot was only 10 to 20 percent effective in those countries. How well it is working the U.S. won't be

known until next week.

This year, illnesses are commonly being reported in people who got a flu shot. Albertson said she did in late October. Jossi didn't.

## Show Your Heart Some Love This Valentine's Day

NASHVILLE — On Valentine's Day, people may feel compelled to make public and sometimes pricey displays of love, such as sending flowers to a sweetheart's workplace, giving chocolates or sweets or taking that special someone out to a lavish dinner.

The Tennessee Department of Health suggests giving yourself and your loved ones the gift of a healthier heart.

"Heart disease is the top cause of death in Tennessee, and claimed the lives of more than 15,000 Tennesseans in 2016," said TDH Assistant Commissioner for Family Health and Wellness Morgan McDonald in a news release.

"Everyday decisions are important for good cardiovascular health," McDonald said. "Show some love to your heart and to the hearts of those important to you every day with behaviors and choices including following a healthy eating plan and being physically active."

### SHOW SOME HEART LOVE

Here are some tips for showing love this Valentine's Day:

• **Heart to Heart** — Reduce stress with a positive outlet like physical activity, meditation or spending quality time with family and friends.

• **All Heart** — Volunteering has been shown to offer positive emotional benefits by connecting with others, which can be good for the heart. You feel good when you do good for others.

• **Get Your Heart Pumping** — The key to heart health is to keep moving. Aim to raise your heart rate with at least 30 minutes of aerobic, physical activity each day. Physical activity helps maintain a healthy weight and keeps the heart strong and disease-free. Take a walk with a loved one on Valentine's Day and every day.

• **Change of Heart** — Quit tobacco use. Tobacco use is one of the greatest risk factors for heart attack and stroke in men and women, and is among the "big four" behaviors that are the biggest contributors to disease and death in Tennessee (along with other substance use disorders, physical inactivity and obesity). Health benefits of quitting tobacco start almost immediately and within a few years of quitting the risk of stroke and heart disease will be similar to that of someone who doesn't use tobacco.

"We love to help Tennesseans who are ready to start their tobacco-free lives on Valentine's Day and every day," said TDH Family Health and Wellness Deputy Medical Director Michelle Fiscus, MD, FAAP, in the news release.

"Counselors at the Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine are ready and waiting to help smokers create quit plans and support them as they kick the habit. Many county health departments also offer the Baby and Me Tobacco-Free program to help pregnant women quit smoking to protect and improve both their health and the health of their ba-



FILE PHOTO

State health officials are encouraging Tennesseans to show their hearts some love this Valentine's Day.

bies. We urge Tennesseans who smoke to call their health care providers or health departments today and ask about services to help them quit."

### HEART HEALTHY TIPS

Here are additional ways to keep your heart healthy for Valentine's Day and all year through:

• **Heartaches** — Symptoms including heart palpitations (skipping beats); shortness of breath; pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach may mean something. Know the symptoms of a heart attack like crushing pain in the chest, sweating, nausea and shortness of breath. Cardiac symptoms can feel different for men and women. Talk to your health care provider about any and all symptoms you experience.

• **Listen to Your Heart** — If you have risk factors, symptoms or a family history of heart disease, talk with your health care provider about testing and the best ways to manage your risk and see him or her regularly for check-ups.

• **Heart Beats** — Know your blood pressure numbers and what they mean. Many people have high blood pressure and don't even know it. Talk with your health care provider about cholesterol checks and make sure your cholesterol is in healthy ranges. Take any medications you are prescribed as directed to manage a heart condition.

## ETSU Opens New Audiology Clinic For Area's Hearing Impaired

East Tennessee State University has opened the doors to a new audiology clinic in the region for the hearing impaired.

The clinic, operated by the ETSU College of Clinical and Rehabilitative Health Sciences, is located at the Marshall T. Nave Center in Elizabethton.

"As a non-profit university health center, our mission is to provide comprehensive diagnostic, rehabilitative and intervention services that improve the quality of life for individuals with hearing loss and related audiological disorders and to treat communication disorders impacting an individual's ability to understand and relate to others," said Dr. Saravanan Elangovan, clinic director, in a news release. "We aim to integrate clinical research and service delivery, and serve as an exemplary model of clinical instruction for students pursuing careers in audiology and speech-language pathology," Elangovan added.

According to the release, the clinic provides patients with access to a variety of services including comprehensive audiology evaluations for all ages including newborns, testing and customized fitting of the latest hearing aid technology and cochlear implants, auditory processing evaluations for school-aged children, tinnitus management, monitoring of auditory status of patients undergoing chemotherapy, hearing conversation and much more.

Providers at the clinic also are members of the ETSU faculty, and, as such, offer audiology and speech-language pathology students hands-on learning experiences with real patients.

"The ability for students to learn goes far beyond textbooks. Here, students will have the opportunity to be fully engaged in patient care," said Dr. Brenda Louw, chair of the Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. "They will work alongside some of the best of the best and receive that hands-on learning that is so critical for students planning careers in health care professions."

The clinic is taking new patients and accepts most insurances while also offering a sliding fee discount program. For more information about the clinic, call 423-439-4355 or visit [www.etsu.edu/caslp](http://www.etsu.edu/caslp).

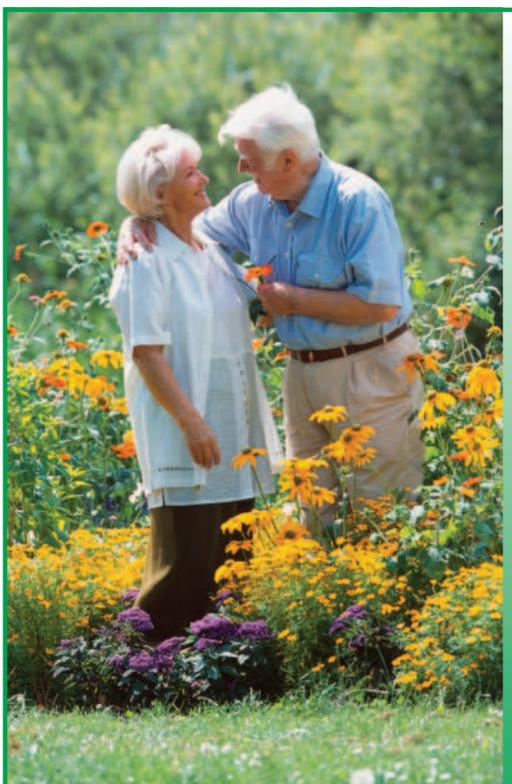
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