



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

This is an official  
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) - Advisory

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20250815-00606-ADV (Health Advisory)  
RECIPIENTS: All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, PAs, and Healthcare Providers –Statewide  
SUBJECT: Friday, August 15, 2025  
Increase in COVID-19-like Illnesses

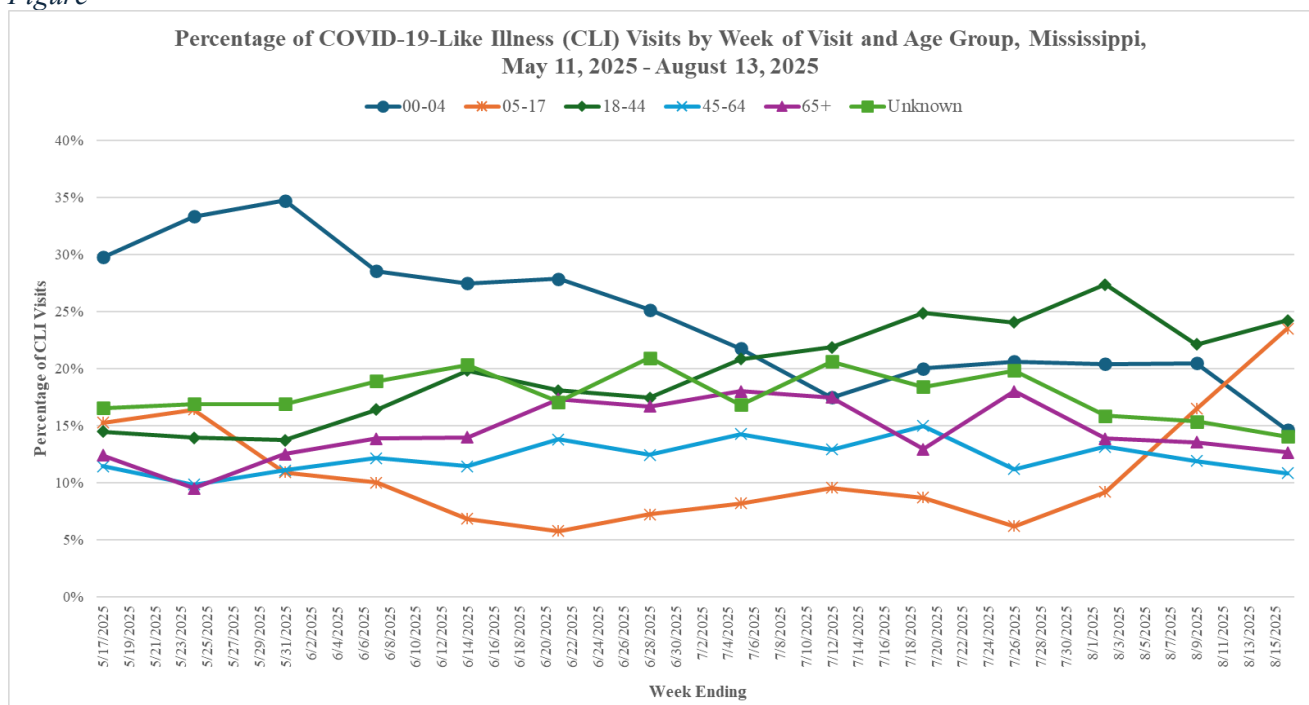
Dear Colleagues,

Since July 27, 2025, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) has noted an increase in COVID-19-like illness (CLI) visits to emergency departments. This notice serves as a reminder for healthcare providers to include COVID-19 testing in their clinical evaluation.

### Current Situation

Nationally, COVID-19 laboratory percent positivity is increasing and emergency department visits for COVID-19 are increasing among all ages. COVID-19 wastewater activity levels and model-based epidemic trends (Rt) indicate that COVID-19 infections are growing or likely growing in most states. In Mississippi, COVID-19-like illnesses (CLI), identified through syndromic surveillance data from emergency rooms visits, began increasing the week of July 27, 2025, and continue to trend upward. This trend has also been noted in COVID-19 wastewater surveillance data. In recent weeks, the most notable rise in cases in Mississippi has occurred in the 5 to 17 years of age group (Figure).

Figure



## **Testing Recommendations**

Individuals presenting with upper respiratory symptoms—such as fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue, or body aches—should be evaluated for COVID-19 as part of the differential diagnosis, along with other respiratory illnesses like influenza and RSV. For diagnostic testing, the CDC recommends collecting an upper respiratory specimen using a sterile swab.

Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs), including PCR tests, remain the gold standard for COVID-19 tests due to their high sensitivity. Antigen tests provide faster results – typically within 15 to 30 minutes – and while positive results are accurate and reliable, in general, antigen tests are less likely to detect the virus than NAAT tests, particularly in asymptomatic individuals. The FDA recommends two negative antigen tests (48 hours apart) for symptomatic individuals or three for those without symptoms. A single NAAT test may be used to confirm antigen test results.

Free COVID-19 testing is available by appointment through [county health departments](#) statewide. Testing is available for individuals with symptoms or potential exposure. To schedule a free test, call [855-767-0170](tel:855-767-0170) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## **Treatment Recommendations**

Healthcare providers should consider COVID-19 treatment in patients with mild or moderate COVID-19 who have one or more risk factors for severe COVID-19 to reduce progression to hospitalization and death. Treatment must be started as soon as possible and within 5-7 days of symptom onset. Pre-exposure prophylaxis medication is available for those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised for additional protection against COVID-19. For additional treatment information and recommendations, refer to the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/hcp/clinical-care/outpatient-treatment.html>.

## **Vaccination Recommendations**

COVID-19 vaccination helps protect against severe illness, hospitalization, and death, but protection decreases over time—similar to natural immunity after infection. The CDC recommends vaccination for most adults aged 18 and older, including those previously vaccinated, those who have had COVID-19, and individuals with long COVID. Vaccination is especially important for people aged 65 and older, those at high risk for severe illness, residents of long-term care facilities, and women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to become pregnant, might become pregnant in the future, or those who have never received a COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccines are available at county health departments for qualifying individuals aged 6 months and older. [Free vaccination](#) is available at MSDH locations for uninsured or underinsured individuals.

Flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines may be given during the same visit, but if given separately, no waiting period is required between doses.

## **Additional Prevention Recommendations**

In addition to vaccination, individuals can take preventive steps to reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses. These include practicing good hygiene—such as covering coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing hands frequently, and cleaning commonly touched surfaces. Anyone with respiratory symptoms should stay home and avoid contact with others. Wearing a mask and maintaining distance from others can also help lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Those at risk of severe illness

should seek prompt medical care for testing and treatment, as early treatment—started within a few days of symptom onset—can reduce the risk of serious outcomes.

### **Reporting Requirements**

MSDH made changes to its COVID-19 reporting requirements on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Individual SARS-CoV-2 test results from any testing methodology are no longer reportable to MSDH. COVID-19 associated deaths in **non-pregnant** women do not require reporting to MSDH.

Pediatric COVID-19 associated deaths, COVID-19 associated deaths in **pregnant** women, COVID-19 associated Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), and COVID-19 outbreaks are reportable to MSDH.

For additional information regarding reporting, please refer to the [MSDH Reportable Disease List](#).

### **Additional Resources**

- Respiratory Illnesses Data Channel: <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data/index.html>
- Testing for COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/testing/index.html>
- Interim Guidelines for Collecting and Handling of Clinical Specimens for COVID-19 Testing: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/hcp/clinical-care/clinical-specimen-guidelines.html>
- Getting Tested for COVID-19: <https://msdh.ms.gov/page/14,0,420,874.html>
- COVID-19 Treatment Clinical Care for Outpatients: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/hcp/clinical-care/outpatient-treatment.html>
- Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>
- Vaccination Against COVID-19: <https://msdh.ms.gov/page/14,0,420,976.html>
- What to Know About Getting Flu, COVID-19, and RSV Vaccines at the Same Time: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncird/whats-new/getting-vaccines-at-same-time.html>

Regards,

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