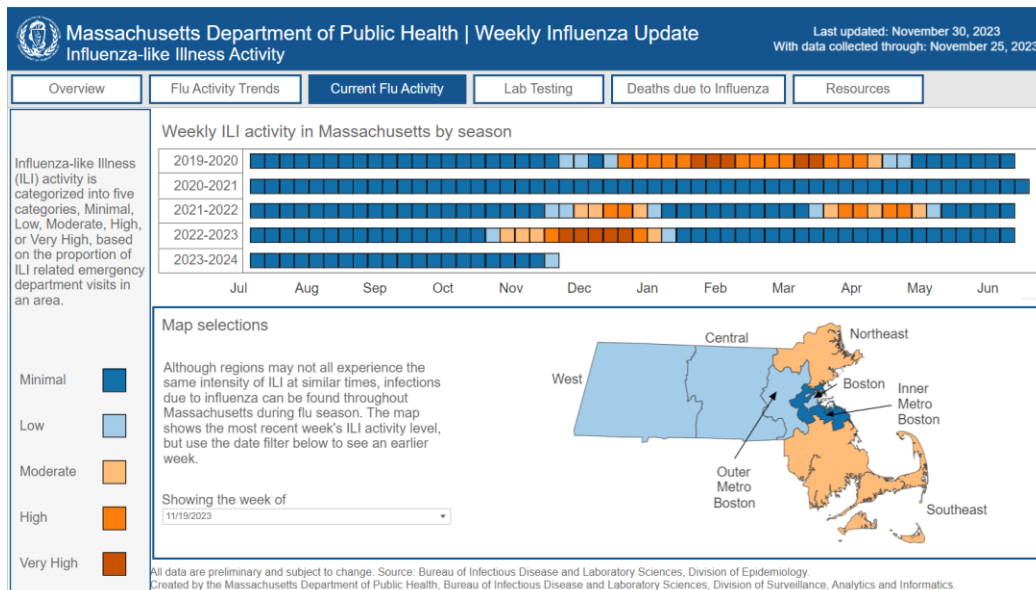


I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving! This week's health newsletter provides an update on the status of respiratory illness in the state, as well as an opportunity to order COVID-19 test kits for free.

Viral Respiratory Illness Reporting:

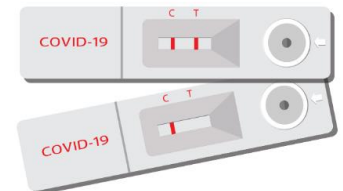
In Massachusetts, influenza severity, COVID-19 ED visit levels, and COVID-19 hospital admissions levels are all low. During the week of 11/19 – 11/25, approximately, 12.9% of emergency department visits to hospitals in Worcester County were related to acute respiratory disease. During that time period, 15.3% of Massachusetts residents have been vaccinated against COVID-19 with the 2023-2024 dose, and 32.3% have been vaccinated against influenza.

Compared to last season, the 2023-2024 weekly influenza-like illness (ILI) activity started approximately 4 weeks later, indicated in the chart below. This may indicate a shorter influenza season or an influenza season that started later. Additionally, Central Massachusetts has low ILI, which is based on the proportion of ILI related emergency department visits in the area, whereas the Northeast and Southeast have moderate ILI activity.



COVID-19 Test Kits:

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order an additional 4 free at-home tests beginning November 20. If you did not order tests this fall yet, you may place two orders for a total of 8 tests. Your order of COVID tests is completely free – you won't even pay for shipping.



Visit www.covid.gov/tests to order your test kits. These extra test kits will come in handy this winter season!

As a note - before you throw out "expired" tests: Check [FDA's website](https://www.fda.gov) to see if your COVID-19 tests' expiration dates have been extended.

Please let me know if you have any questions!