



SUPER FLU

The **Philippine Department of Health (DOH)** has addressed concerns about the so-called “**super flu**”, an influenza A(H3N2) subclade K variant, in recent briefings and statements. **DOH** emphasizes that the situation in the Philippines is **not alarming** and does not pose a serious health threat or indicate an outbreak.

“Super Flu” refers to a media nickname for the dominant circulating strain in the ongoing 2025-2026 flu season. It’s not an official medical term or a new “superbug,” but rather a drifted version of the common seasonal H3N2 flu virus that emerged too late to be perfectly matched by this season’s vaccine.

Subclade K drives most cases (over 90% of characterized H3N2 viruses). It caused widespread illness due to partial vaccine mismatch but does not appear more deadly on an individual level than typical H3N2 strains—experts emphasize the surge is from higher transmission and lower immunity, not increased virulence.

This is a tough seasonal flu wave, not a pandemic like COVID or bird flu (H5N1 remains sporadic with no sustained human transmission). Activity is expected to continue for weeks but should peak soon. Stay safe!

Key Points on super flu

- It has caused significant surges in cases in the **United States, United Kingdom**, and parts of Europe during their winter season, due to partial mismatch with the 2025-2026 Northern Hemisphere vaccine.
- In the Philippines, **limited cases** of this variant were detected in 2025 (reports vary slightly: 17 cases from July-August in Metro Manila, or up to 41 cases from August-October nationwide, representing about 35% of sequenced influenza cases in that period). **All patients recovered**, and there are **no reports of ongoing surges** or new increases in 2026.
- Symptoms are similar to regular seasonal flu (fever, cough, sore throat, severe body aches, headache, fatigue) but can feel more intense and last longer—hence the media nickname “super flu.”
- It is not more deadly or virulent than typical H3N2 strains.

The symptoms are similar to regular flu but often feel more intense:

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|  | • High fever |  | • Sore throat |
|  | • Severe body aches |  | • Headache |
|  | • Extreme fatigue |  | • Sometimes nausea or congestion |
|  | • Cough | | |

Symptoms can last days to weeks, with sudden onset.

Prevention



The 2025-2026 flu vaccine still offers some protection, especially against severe outcomes, and it’s not too late to get it.

Antivirals work well if started early; consult with your doctor.

Practice basics: hand hygiene, masking in crowded places, and staying home when sick.

Influenza in the Philippines is seasonal, typically peaking during the **rainy season** (not winter), and the current Southern Hemisphere vaccine formulation provides good coverage against circulating strains, including Influenza A types.

References:

<https://www.doh.gov.ph> • <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/2025-2026.html> | <https://www.cdc.gov/fluview/surveillance/2025-week-52.html>
<https://www.statnews.com/2026/01/06/flu-season-2026-subclade-k-explained-by-influenza-experts/>
<https://www.today.com/health/cold-flu/new-flu-strain-2025>

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