

# Arizona emergency room doctors seeing fewer patients with flu this year

BRITTNI THOMASON

POSTED FEB 26, 2021



Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Arizona is seeing a record low in flu cases.



**PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5)** - In at least one way, the COVID-19 pandemic may have made a positive impact on our health. Flu cases are way down this season in Arizona.

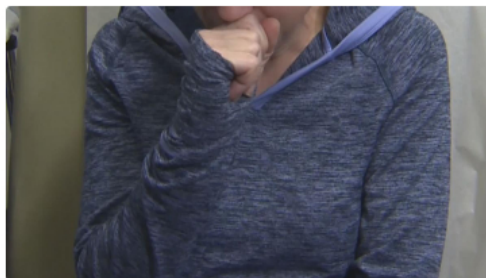
"In Maricopa County, they're down about 95% from the average," said Valleywise emergency room Dr. Frank LoVecchio.

Data for Arizona shows last year by this time, we'd seen nearly 28,000 cases of the flu.

This year, we're only at 850 cases so far.

"I've been practicing here for almost three decades, and this is the lowest, mildest flu season that I've seen," said LoVecchio.

**There's hardly any flu this year.**  
**Coronavirus restrictions may be responsible**



Data for Arizona shows last year by this time, we'd seen nearly 28,000 cases of the flu.

(Source: 3TV/CBS 5)

Since summer, health care workers worried COVID-19 and flu patients would be too much for hospitals to handle.

"It's been a really pleasant surprise," said Arya Chowdhury, an emergency room doctor for several Valley hospitals. "We really have not seen many cases of the flu. I've personally seen one case."

The pandemic brought more handwashing, mask-wearing and social distancing, reasons doctors think flu cases are down.

"It's not influenza went away," said LoVecchio. "It's just that we're doing things that protect us against it."

"In addition, there was a huge push for vaccination of the flu in August or so," said Chowdhury. "I think that also contributed."



The pandemic brought more handwashing, mask-wearing and social distancing, reasons doctors think flu cases are down.

(Source: 3TV/CBS 5)

### **Arizona flu numbers are low compared to last year**

No matter what the cause, health care workers say it's a trend they hope continues.

"It's very unlikely that the flu is going to go higher from here," said LoVecchio. "It's been a saving grace in all of this."

---