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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 2, 2026

Contact: Permanent Secretary
Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Subject: Ministry Urges Precautions as Influenza A and COVID-19 Cases Increase

The Ministry of Health, Wellness, Environmental Health and Energy advises the public that surveillance has identified an increase in laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A and COVID-19 during September and October 2026.

Infection	August	September	October	January–October total
Influenza A	1	47	86	149
COVID-19	4	16	19	43

September and October together accounted for 133 of the 149 influenza A cases (89.3%) and 35 of the 43 COVID-19 cases (81.4%) reported from January to October 2026. To date, one death due to influenza A has been reported. This patient had a history of diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure). The patient was hospitalized in the intensive care unit (ICU) and subsequently died.

Children under 10 accounted for 43 cases of influenza A (28.9%), including 28 among children aged 0–4 and 15 among those aged 5–9. Among COVID-19 cases, five (5) cases (11.6%) were reported among children aged 0–4. The largest number of cases in any single age group was six (6) (14.0%), among people aged 45–49. Both infections can cause fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches and fatigue. Symptoms alone cannot reliably distinguish between them.

The Ministry urges residents to:

1. Stay at home when unwell and keep unwell children home from school and daycare.
2. Wear a well-fitting mask when caring for someone with respiratory symptoms, or if you have respiratory symptoms and must be around others, including when seeking medical care.
3. Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
4. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or bent elbow. Dispose of used tissues promptly and clean your hands.
5. Improve ventilation by opening windows and doors where safe and practical.

Older adults, pregnant women, people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, and those with weakened immune systems should seek medical advice early if symptoms develop. Parents and caregivers should also seek early medical advice for young children, especially those under five, who are at higher risk of influenza complications.

The Ministry advises anyone experiencing difficulty breathing, persistent chest pain, confusion or severe dehydration to seek urgent medical attention. Children who are unusually drowsy, unable to drink or having difficulty breathing also require urgent assessment.

Families, schools and workplaces are encouraged to support these measures and follow the Ministry's official platforms for updates.

ENDS