

Flu Epidemic Strikes Moscow

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Two girls wearing masks while reading a comic in the Moscow metro. **Igor Tabakov**

Moscow and 18 other regions are in the throes of a flu epidemic, and young people should wear masks to prevent infection, the country's top health official said Tuesday, Interfax reported.

Over 80,000 cases of flu have been recorded in Moscow in the past week, more than half of them in children, chief sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko told reporters.

Incidences of flu in the capital are 9.8 percent above the epidemic level, he said, adding that anything below 10 percent is considered "tolerable."

Flu epidemics have also been declared in St. Petersburg and other regions, the hardest hit being the republic of Bashkortostan, where incidences of flu exceed epidemic levels by 61 percent.

Twenty-eight schools in 18 regions, affecting more than 5,400 pupils, remained closed for a

fourth week to prevent transmission of the disease, he said.

Onishchenko encouraged young people, especially those working in food service and retail, to get used to the idea of wearing gauze masks.

"Mask-wearing is an element of human culture. Going to classical music concerts, to the Bolshoi Theater, that's also culture. Masks, too, are culture — a culture of health," he said.

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