

Russian Health Watchdog Warns of Flu Spike

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Russia's Rospotrebnadzor is expecting a rise in the incidences of flu this week.

Russia's health watchdog is expecting a rise in the incidences of flu and other respiratory viruses this week, a news report said, as children return to school after the holidays.

"We expect this week that there may be an increase in the incidences of upper respiratory tract infections and influenza," an unidentified source at the Rospotrebnadzor health and safety watchdog told the Interfax news agency on Monday.

The source tied the expected spike in the number of flu cases to Russian students' return to school after the autumn break, during which time they could have picked up the virus from other children on organized trips and at activity camps, the report said.

Anna Popova, who heads Rospotrebnadzor, said last week that there had yet to be a full outbreak of flu in Russia.

"The forecast for the whole of the Russian Federation remains the same — a flu outbreak is

expected ... as of mid-January," she was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Every year, about 30 million people suffer from flu or similar respiratory viruses in Russia, according to the watchdog's data.

About 26 percent of the population have vaccinated themselves against flu this year, the watchdog said last week in an online statement.

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