

# Google tool tracks flu in Australia, New Zealand

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People walk past warning signs as they enter Melbourne's Austin Hospital in Australia. Google on Wednesday expanded "Google Flu Trends," its online tool for tracking influenza outbreaks, to Australia and New Zealand.

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Google said it had built a flu model for the state of Victoria by working with its own search data and historical flu data from the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory.

"We then extrapolated this model to produce flu models at a national and state level for the rest of Australia," Google said in a blog post.

Tasmania and Northern Territory were not included, Google said, because there was not a "large enough volume of search queries to be accurate."

Google Flu Trends analyzes patterns in search queries to determine the spread of the disease and Google research has found that "searches for flu-related topics are closely correlated to the actual spread of flu."

According to Google, Flu Trends search queries can be tallied immediately, providing early detection of flu outbreaks, while traditional flu tracking systems may take days or weeks to collect and release data.

Google said [influenza](#) generates hundreds of thousands of visits to doctors in [Australia](#) every year. "Early detection is critical to helping [health officials](#) respond more quickly and save lives," it said.

Influenza is responsible for some 500,000 deaths around the world each year.

Google Flu Trends, which is located at [google.org/flutrends](http://google.org/flutrends), launched in the United States last year.

Google unveiled an experimental flu trends tool for Mexico in April during the swine [flu outbreak](#).

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