February 13, 2009: Vol. 3, Issue 16 Surveillance Period (week 5): 02/01/09—02/07/09

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES Public Health

INFLUENZA WATCH
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County

Respiratory activity increased during week 5 with increased laboratory detection of influenza and other respiratory viruses (adenovirus and human metapneumovirus). The percent of positive influenza tests surpassed ten percent for the first time this season. There was one severe pediatric influenza case which occurred in week 3 and was reported this week. Additionally, there were two new respiratory outbreaks of unknown etiology reported during week 5; onsets for these outbreaks were during weeks 4 and 5.

Table 1: Surveillance System Overview

SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM*	Week 5	2008-2009 YTD
Percent Positive Influenza Tests±	11.8	3.2
Percent Positive RSV Tests‡	25.0	18.5
Percent Positive Flu A / Flu B	- -	92% / 8%
Severe Pediatric Influenza Cases†	0	1
Respiratory Outbreaks	1	5
Influenza Vaccines Administered (PH)	- -	59,169

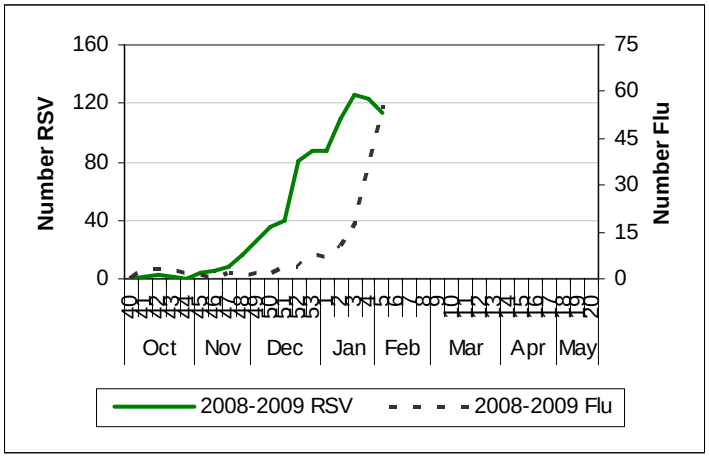
*See http://lapublichealth.org/acd/flu.htm for a description of surveillance methods.

±Sentinel sites (9 participating facilities).

‡ Sentinel sites (4participating facilities).

†The number of deaths is indicated by the parenthesis.

Figure 1: Positive Influenza and RSV Tests by Week



RSV data in Figure 1 represent testing completed in four reporting facilities for the 2008-2009 season. Influenza data represent testing completed in nine facilities.

California

During week 4 (January 25-January 31), influenza activity in California remained **local**, with activity in Northern California higher than Southern California. Outpatient activity and hospitalizations for ILI remained low as did laboratory detections.
http://www.cdph.ca.gov/PROGRAMS/VRDL/Pages/CaliforniaInfluenzaSurveillanceProject.aspx

United States

Influenza activity increased during week 4 (January 25-January 31) but remains low. During this week, 5 states reported **widespread** activity, 21 states reported **regional** activity, 13 reported **local** activity, and 11 reported **sporadic** activity. Influenza activity is lower compared to the same week last year.

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm

In the News

Low Humidity Levels Help Flu Germs Spread

According to research conducted by Oregon State University, influenza viruses are more easily transmitted and survive longer when humidity levels are low. This study re-analyzed data from a previous study and found a strong link between absolute humidity (actual amount of water in the air, irrespective of temperature). Additionally, researchers found that absolute humidity accounts for 90% of flu survival and 50% of transmission. These findings confirm what many researchers had long suspected, that increase transmission and survival of influenza virus during winter months when absolute humidity is lowest.

http://health.usnews.com/articles/health/healthday/2009/02/10/low-humidity-levels-help-flu-germs-spread.html

Influenza Watch Changes

We have changed the data that we present in table 1. Starting with week 5 and continuing throughout the remainder of the season we will report percent positive influenza A and influenza B tests. Please note that the data is aggregated from all 9 laboratories and includes all tests performed to date during the 08-09 season.

Figure 2: Percent of ED Visits for ILI by Week