

Influenza Activity Increasing, Though Still Very Low

Both locally and nationally, influenza activity is showing slight increases but remains low overall. In Los Angeles County, the reported percent positive influenza tests from our sentinel sites has increased over recent weeks, about 15% of tests were positive for influenza during week 3 (Table 1). Yet levels continue to be considerably lower than the past two seasons (22.3% positive during week 3 of the 2014–2015 season, 25% positive during week 3 of the 2013–2014 season). In addition, this season a much greater proportion of type B influenza has been circulating as compared to last season; to date, 39% of all positive influenza tests from our sentinel sites have been type B, while only 6% were type B this time last year.

These local findings are similar to national reports for influenza activity; only moderate increases are occurring across most states, with low overall levels of activity. Viral subtyping conducted by the CDC continues to identify relatively high levels of type B influenza with 27% of national influenza samples testing positive for B during week 3. Among type A isolates that have been subtyped during week 3, 76% were the pandemic H1N1 2009 strain. This year's vaccine continues to closely match the current circulating viral strains and should provide good protection against disease. Because influenza can circulate into spring, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continue to urge vaccination for those who have not been vaccinated yet against influenza.

Table 1. Los Angeles County Influenza Surveillance Summary

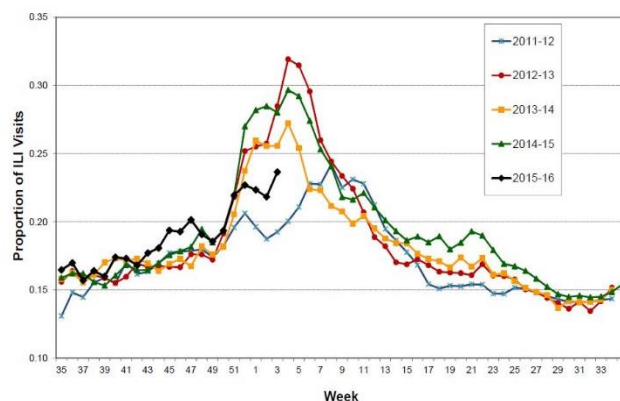
	2015-2016		2014-2015	
	Week 3*	YTD [†]	Week 3	YTD
Positive Flu Tests/Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	234/1,548 (15.1%)	852/22,468 (3.8%)	603/2,708 (22.3%)	2,795/22,072 (12.7%)
Percent Flu A/B	58/42	61/39	96/4	94/6
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	4	4	18
Influenza Confirmed Outbreaks	0	0	2	11
Pediatric Flu Deaths‡	0	0	1	1
Adult Flu Deaths	0	5	8	25

*For the 2015-2016 season, week 3 extends from 1/17/16 to 1/23/16

†The influenza surveillance year started August 30, 2015.

‡Confirmed influenza death is defined by a positive lab test, ILI symptoms, and clear progression from illness to death

Figure 1. ILI proportion of ED Visits, Los Angeles County 2011-2016



Viral Shedding During Influenza Infection May Precede Symptoms

A recent study by [Ip et al. in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*](#) employed a prospective study design to examine the household transmission of influenza infections in Hong Kong over a 7-year period (2008–2014) with viral shedding results from 224 secondary cases of influenza. Index cases of influenza infection confirmed through rapid testing were recruited in outpatient clinics and their households were followed up through a series of 3 home visits by study staff over the course of the following week.

The main finding highlighted by the authors is that clinical symptoms and viral shedding are less well correlated for influenza B than for influenza A, with shedding occurring both earlier than symptom peak as well as following symptom resolution. Viral shedding in influenza A virus infections peaked on the first 1–2 days of clinical illness, while shedding in influenza B virus infections rose up to 2 days prior to symptom onset.

This study can support the importance of vaccinating medical staff since the spread of this disease can potentially occur prior to fully recognizing one's illness. Removal from work when feeling ill might not be sufficient to prevent the spread of influenza.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health continues to [mandate influenza vaccination for healthcare workers](#) or masking during flu season if vaccination is declined.

**NOTICE FOR ALL
HEALTHCARE FACILITY STAFF**

Are you vaccinated against flu?

Stop flu among patients and staff.

The Los Angeles County Health Officer Order requires all healthcare staff to be vaccinated against flu. If declined, staff **must** wear a mask during flu season.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>