

INFLUENZA WATCH

December 9, 2011
Surveillance Week 48
Volume 6, Issue 4

Flu Surveillance and Related Disease Updates for Los Angeles County

Slow Start to Flu Season

Local surveillance continues to show an increase in influenza-like illness (ILI) activity consistent with this time of year (Figure 1). Parainfluenza levels, which were higher in previous weeks, appear to be decreasing, and rhinovirus/enterovirus has leveled off (Figure 2). Locally, influenza levels remain low; statewide, influenza activity has been sporadic. If the recent pattern of local ILI activity continues to be consistent with previous years, Los Angeles County may experience an initial peak of activity prior to the New Year, followed by a more substantial peak in February. This demonstrates the need to continue vaccination into the New Year.

Table 1
LA County Surveillance Summary (2011-2012)
Surveillance Week 48

LA County Surveillance Summary	Week 48	2011-2012 Season YTD
Positive Flu Tests / Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	4 / 349 (1.1%)	29 / 5,145 (0.6%)
Percent Flu A / B	20 / 80	60 / 40
Positive RSV Tests / Total Tests (Percent Positive RSV Tests)	5 / 241 (2.1%)	30 / 3,822 (0.8%)
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	2
Flu Deaths, Confirmed (Pediatric Deaths, Confirmed)	----- *	0 (0)

* Due to the lag time in reporting and confirmation of cause, weekly flu death data is delayed.

Figure 1
Influenza-like Illness ED Visits in LA County (2007-2012)
Surveillance Week 48

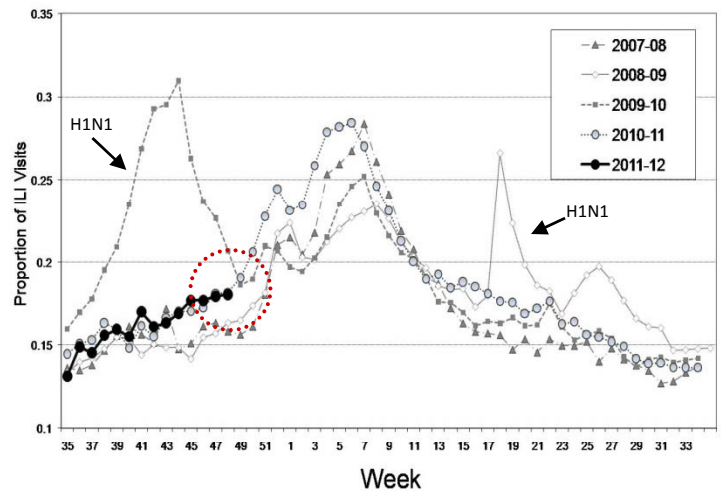
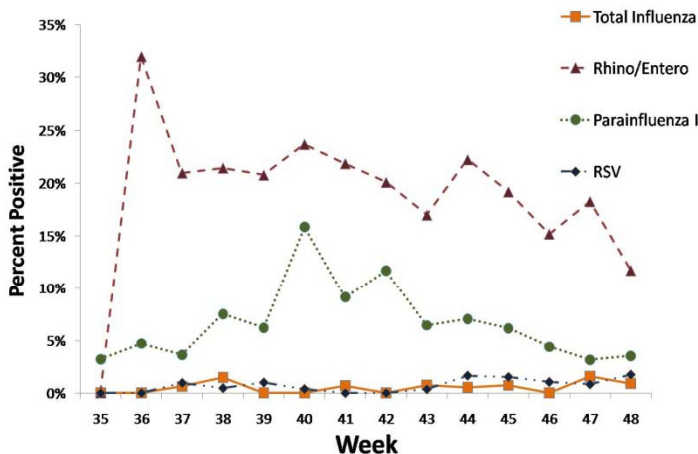


Figure 2
Respiratory Viruses in LA County
Percent Positive Cases by MMWR Week



As of Week 48, influenza levels remain low and parainfluenza levels have decreased since peaking at week 40. Rhinovirus/enterovirus has also leveled off.

Novel Influenza Infection Reported in Three Iowa Children

On November 22, the Iowa Department of Public Health reported the identification a novel strain of influenza virus in three children who attended the same gathering (described at <http://tinyurl.com/85dnjby>). All three reported only mild illness and have since recovered. CDC testing confirmed that the virus resembles the swine-origin influenza A (H3N2) and shares genes with pandemic 2009 H1N1. Though rare, swine-origin flu infections in humans can occur, especially after close contact with pigs.

To date, a total of 10 cases of this novel H3N2 have been identified in four states since July: Pennsylvania, Maine, Indiana and Iowa. All cases had relatively mild illness and recovered, although three were hospitalized. While the early cases were associated with exposure to pigs, later cases appear to have been transmitted between humans.

Despite some similarities, this virus differs from human influenza A (H3N2); as such, seasonal influenza vaccine provides only limited protection to adults and no protection to children. These viruses are expected to be susceptible to neuraminidase inhibitor drugs like Tamiflu®.

It is important to note that swine flu viruses do not spread through contact with pork or pork products, and consuming properly handled and cooked pork is safe. While pig exposure is uncommon in Los Angeles, clinicians should ask patients that present with respiratory illness about holiday travel to more rural areas of the country. If there is evidence of exposure, please contact the Acute Communicable Disease Control Program (213-240-7941) to request appropriate testing.

For more information on swine flu, visit:

www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/index.htm

