

## 2012 Begins as 2011 Ended, with Minimal Local Flu Activity

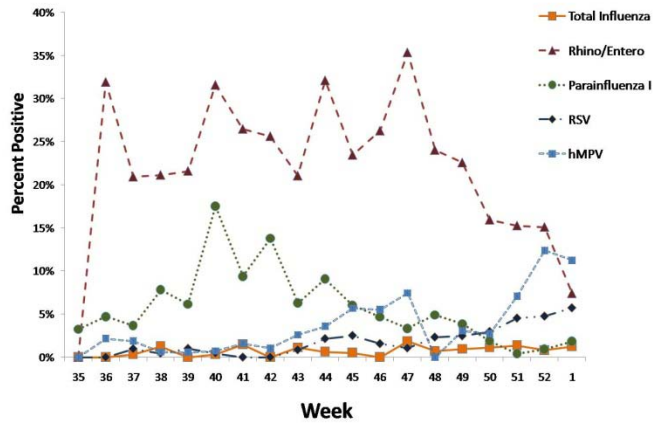
Respiratory virus surveillance in Los Angeles County continues to show low levels of activity: only 1% and 6% of respiratory samples tested positive for influenza and RSV versus 11% and 45%, respectively, this time last year. In contrast, rhino/enterovirus (~7%) and human metapneumovirus (hMPV) (11%) are more prevalent at this time (Figure 1). Despite low overall respiratory activity, three influenza deaths have been confirmed: one pediatric case (flu B) and two elderly men (flu A, flu B). Flu vaccinations are still available; because flu can be expected to continue to circulate into the spring it is not too late to vaccinate.

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

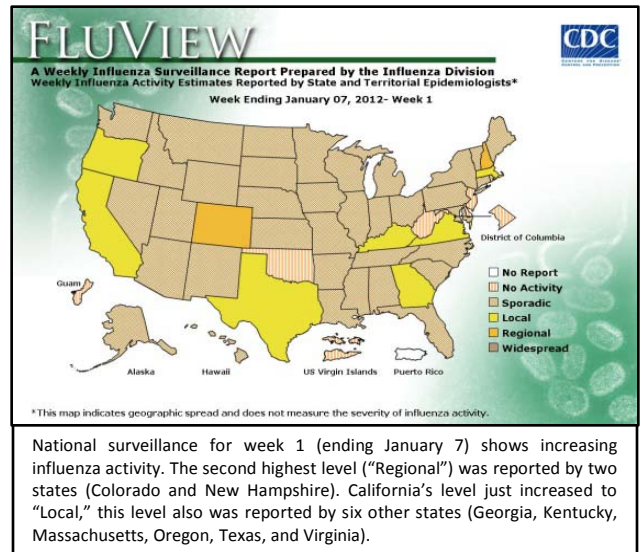
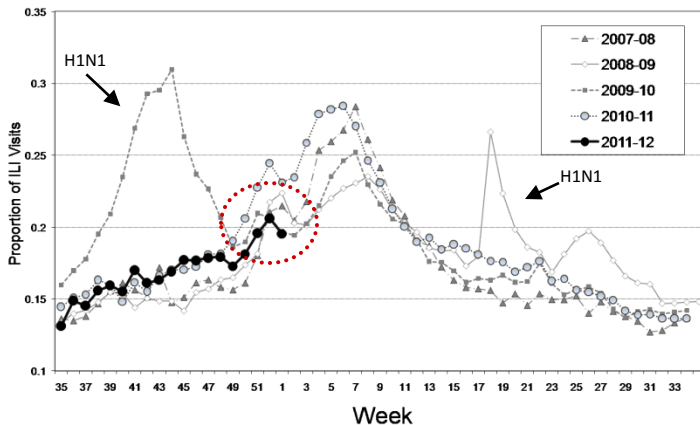
LA County Surveillance Summary	Week 1	2011-2012 Season YTD
Positive Flu Tests / Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	5 / 401 (1.2%)	55 / 7,061 (0.8%)
Percent Flu A / B	60 / 40	60 / 40
Positive RSV Tests / Total Tests (Percent Positive RSV Tests)	20 / 350 (5.7%)	108 / 5,211 (2.1%)
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	2
Flu Deaths, Confirmed (Pediatric Deaths, Confirmed)	----- *	3 (1)

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

**Figure 1. Respiratory Viruses in LA County (2011-2012) Percent Positive by MMWR Week**



**Figure 2. Influenza-like Illness ED Visits in LA County (2007-2012) Percent Positive by MMWR Week**



### Google Helps Predict Local Influenza Trends

Google Flu Trends (GFT) allows users to estimate and track the spread of influenza-like illness (ILI) worldwide. The tool (at <http://www.google.org/flutrends>) uses aggregated Google search data to estimate ILI activity around the world. How does the tool work? Google found a close relationship between how many people search for flu-related topics and how many people actually have ILI. While not every person who searches for "flu" actually has influenza, a pattern emerges when all flu-related search queries are added together. In this new study (at <http://tinyurl.com/7mh5764>), researchers compared GFT with traditional influenza surveillance systems at a local level and found that flu search queries tend to increase as laboratory confirmed influenza increases, demonstrating that GFT may provide trends on the local prevalence of influenza.