

# INFLUENZA WATCH

Influenza and Related Disease Updates for Los Angeles County

December 7, 2017  
Surveillance Week 48  
Ending 12/2/17  
Volume 12, Issue 3

## Flu Activity Higher Than Usual, and Increasing

Influenza (flu) activity is increasing in Los Angeles County. During week 48, ending December 2, 7.7% respiratory samples were positive for flu among those who were tested by one of our sentinel surveillance hospitals (Table 1). So far this season, flu activity has remained higher than at comparable points in previous seasons. Over the last five seasons the average percent positive for surveillance week 48 was 2.0%.

According to the CDC, the most widely circulating strain of flu this season is A H3N2. [Seasons where influenza A H3N2 predominates are typically more severe than A H1N1 or B seasons, and these seasons also are more likely to affect older populations.](#) The best defense against flu is the seasonal vaccine. It can take up to two weeks for immunity to develop, so getting vaccinated now can help protect you and your loved ones as the flu season picks up. Despite the benefits of the flu vaccine, the CDC estimates that roughly 3 out of 5 people in the US have not yet been vaccinated. Early laboratory data suggests that this year's vaccine is a good match with the strains of flu virus that are circulating. Additionally, circulating strains are similar to last year; therefore the CDC expects this year's vaccine effectiveness to be similar to that of last year's vaccine.

Figure 1. Influenza Positive Tests from Sentinel Laboratories  
Los Angeles County, 2017-18 Season

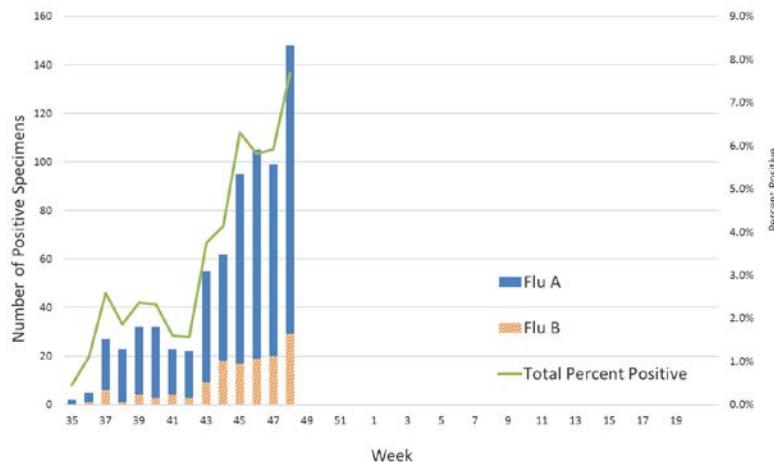


Table 1. Los Angeles County Influenza Surveillance Summary

	2017-2018		2016-2017	
	Week 48*	YTD <sup>†</sup>	Week 48	YTD
Positive Flu Tests/Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	148/1926 (7.7%)	730/17522 (4.2%)	58/1,561 (3.7%)	233/14578 (1.6%)
Percent Flu A/B	80/20	82/18	84/16	92/8

\*For the 2017-2018 season, week 48 starts 11/26/2017 and ends 12/2/2017.

†The influenza surveillance year started August 27, 2017.

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

## CDC FLU FACT

The flu vaccine does NOT cause flu illness. The viruses in the flu shot are inactivated (i.e., killed), which means they cannot cause infection.

#FIGHT FLU  
[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

## Influenza Vaccination Beneficial During Pregnancy

Getting an influenza (flu) vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting pregnant women and their babies from severe illness from flu. When given during pregnancy, vaccination protects both the mother and her baby. It also provides some antibodies for babies that will help protect them from flu for several months after birth. This is especially important because babies younger than 6 months can't get vaccinated yet, but are at high risk of being hospitalized from this disease. Pregnancy causes changes in the immune system that put women at an increased risk of severe illness and complications from the flu.

Because of the danger flu poses to pregnant women, vaccination is recommended and is safe at any point during pregnancy. However, this year's early data suggests that the vaccination rate among pregnant women is low. A strong recommendation by a healthcare provider and an offer to vaccinate at the time of a patient's visit is one of the best ways to increase flu vaccination among pregnant women.

[More information on flu and pregnancy is available from the CDC.](#)

