

Flu Season Winding Down, But Not Over Yet

Flu activity in Los Angeles County continues to decline. During week 14 (ending April 9, 2016) 9.4% of respiratory specimens from our sentinel sites tested positive for flu (Table 1). The overall severity of this season has been slightly milder than past seasons, activity peaked later and continues to linger into spring. The number of deaths where flu was a contributing factor has increased and is now comparable to the number of deaths identified last season.

National flu levels have also declined, yet remain somewhat elevated. During week 14, the number of states with widespread activity has decreased from 25 to 18 (Figure 2). Several factors likely helped to produce the year's milder season. Foremost, no new widely circulating influenza viruses were identified this season and the vaccine was a good match. Nonetheless, influenza still contributes to considerable levels of morbidity and mortality, especially for vulnerable populations. As of April 12, the CDC reported that 40 children have died from flu complications.

Table 1. Los Angeles County Influenza Surveillance Summary

	2015-2016		2014-2015	
	Week 14*	YTD†	Week 14	YTD
Positive Flu Tests/Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	116/1,235 (9.4%)	6,463/48,579 (13.4%)	65/897 (7.2%)	5,429/39,960 (13.6%)
Percent Flu A/B	60/40	51/49	23/77	86/14
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	30	0	37
Influenza Confirmed Outbreaks	0	1	0	18
Pediatric Flu Deaths‡	0	2	0	3
Adult Flu Deaths	0	49	0	53

*For the 2015-2016 season, week 14 extends from 4/3/16 to 4/9/16.

†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.

Flu Vaccine Composition: Changes for the 2016-2017 Season

In February 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced their recommendations for the composition of the 2016-2017 Influenza vaccine for the northern hemisphere. For the trivalent vaccine, WHO proposed the following:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus

These recommendations reflect a change in the H3N2 selected strain from the current vaccine which includes A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus. WHO also advises that quadrivalent vaccines containing two influenza B viruses contain the above three viruses in addition to a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus, which is currently included in 2015-2016 quadrivalent vaccines. The same recommendations have been made for the Southern Hemisphere's 2016 season.

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

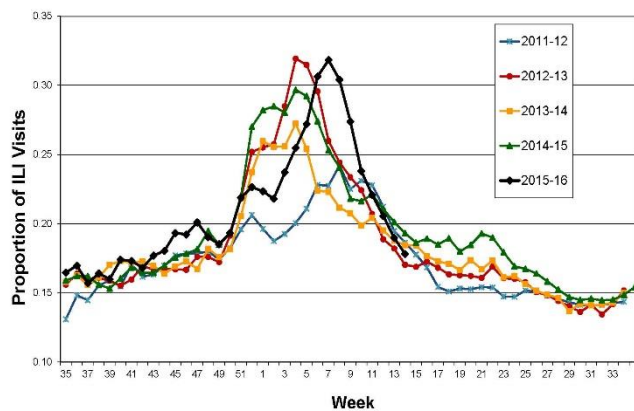


Figure 2.

A Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report Prepared by the Influenza Division
Weekly Influenza Activity Estimates Reported by State and Territorial Epidemiologists*
Week Ending April 09, 2016- Week 14

