

Influenza Activity Increasing, Though Still Low

Over the past two weeks, influenza activity has increased slightly both locally and nationwide, but remains low overall. In Los Angeles County (LAC) during week 51 (December 20-26, 2015), less than 4% of all respiratory specimens collected by our sentinel sites tested positive for flu, much lower compared to the 8.8% seen during the same time last year (Table 1). To date, no influenza-related deaths have been reported in LAC this season. The LAC Department of Public Health (DPH) [requires confirmed flu deaths of all ages to be reported within seven days from identification](#). Similar low levels of influenza activity are occurring across the US; [less than 3% of respiratory specimens reported to the CDC's virologic surveillance tested positive for influenza during week 50, and most have been type A](#). Nationally, [the proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza remains below the epidemic threshold](#). Virologic surveillance and characterization continue to indicate that the currently circulating strains closely match those selected for this season's vaccine. LAC DPH urges everyone older than 6 months of age and without contraindications to be vaccinated annually.

The year is over, but the flu has not gone away.



If you haven't been vaccinated against the flu, it's not too late! Flu continues to cause illness, hospitalizations and deaths long into the spring.

Remember, even if you got a flu vaccine last season, you should get vaccinated again, since flu vaccines wear off over time and change almost every year.

Make it a resolution in your family to **get vaccinated every year.**

If you don't have a regular health care provider, call 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov to find free or low-cost vaccinations near you.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov

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233—English



Table 1. Los Angeles County Influenza Surveillance Summary

	2015-2016		2014-2015	
	Week 51	YTD [†]	Week 51	YTD
Positive Flu Tests/Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	35/904 (3.9%)	196/15,524 (1.3%)	97/1,097 (8.8%)	333/10,935 (3.0%)
Percent Flu A/B	51/49	74/26	92/8	85/15
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	4	0	2
Influenza Confirmed Outbreaks	0	0	0	0
Pediatric Flu Deaths [†]	0	0	0	0
Adult Flu Deaths	0	0	0	0

[†]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

Influenza is Dangerous for Children

[Children are especially vulnerable to severe outcomes from influenza infections](#). Children that are at particularly high risk from flu include:

- Infants 6 months and younger. Because vaccination is not approved for this age group, it is critical that their close contacts (family, caretakers, etc.) be vaccinated.
- Children 6 months to 5 years of age; and
- Children 6 months to 18 years with chronic health conditions such as [asthma](#), [heart disease](#), [neurologic conditions](#), [diabetes](#) and those with weakened immune systems or are on long-term aspirin therapy.

Sadly though, even many healthy children are hospitalized and die from this disease. [In an assessment of the 2012-2013 flu season](#), 40% of the 105 pediatric fatalities across the US had no recognized chronic health condition that would put them at higher risk for developing serious flu-related complications. In addition, the majority of the children that die from flu are not vaccinated against this disease. The same 2012-2013 assessment also revealed that 90% of the pediatric fatalities that season were not vaccinated.

The single best way of protecting children from flu is annual vaccination. LAC DPH strongly encourages all children older than 6 months of age to be vaccinated every year. In addition, children between the ages of 6 months to 8 years that are being vaccinated for the first time [require two doses](#) of the vaccine. One dose in these children does provide sufficient protective immunity. Resources to encourage parents to vaccinate children against flu are available from the [National Foundation for Infectious Diseases](#).

