

Influenza Activity Remains Elevated: Older Adults at Increased Risk This Season

For the ninth week in a row, flu activity in Los Angeles County persisted at elevated levels. During week 7, ending February 17, a little less than 1 in 5 laboratory tests (16.5%) were positive for influenza among those with influenza-like illness (ILI) presenting at our sentinel clinic sites (Table 1). This season the percent positive has remained over 15% since week 51, beginning December 17, 2016, for a total of 66 days (Figure 1). In contrast, the past four seasons the duration of peak activity was much shorter, the duration of percent positive for influenza over 15% lasted only 6.5 weeks on average, 45 days. In addition, older adults are more likely experience severe illness from influenza this season as compared to previous recent seasons. Among the 44 influenza-related deaths identified in Los Angeles County to date, 3 out of 4 (75%) were older than 65 years of age. The average age of influenza-related deaths this season is 79 years old (median 85 years, range 43–102 years), substantially older than the average age among deaths of the past four years which was 62 years (median 65 years, range 0.5–99 years).

Because antiviral treatment is most effective when provided within the first 48 hours of illness, older adults and others also at [high risk](#) for severe consequences from influenza (especially pregnant women and individuals with asthma or chronic health conditions) should seek treatment immediately if they experience influenza-like [symptoms](#). Treatment should not be delayed while waiting for laboratory confirmation. LAC DPH has developed [guidelines](#) and [materials](#) to assist with the management and prevention of influenza among older adults in skilled nursing facilities.

	2016-2017		2015-2016	
	Week 7*	YTD†	Week 7	YTD
Positive Flu Tests/Total Tests (% Positive Flu Tests)	310/1,876 (16.5%)	5,101/42,290 (12%)	960/3,059 (31.4%)	3,149/32,707 (9.6%)
Percent Flu A/B	98/2	98/2	49/51	55/45
Pediatric Flu Deaths‡	0	0	0	0
Adult Flu Deaths	0	44	12	28

*For the 2016-2017 season, week 7 extends from 2/12/2017 to 2/18/2017.

†The influenza surveillance year started August 28, 2016.

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

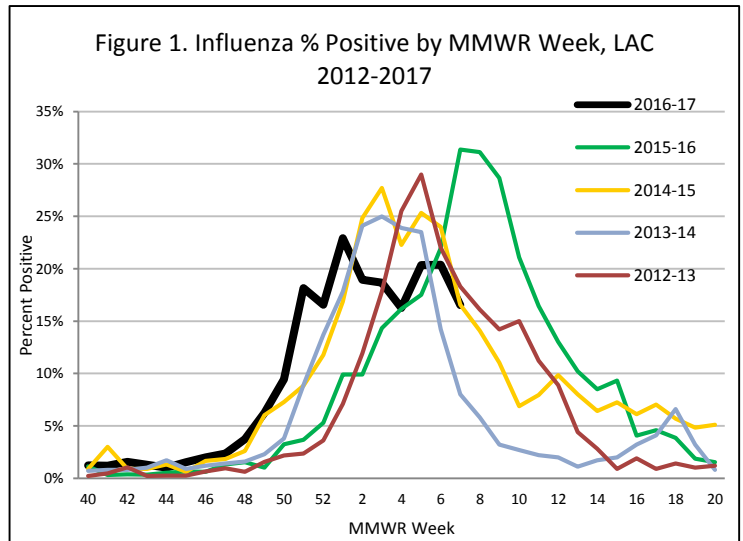


Figure 1. Influenza % Positive by MMWR Week, LAC 2012-2017

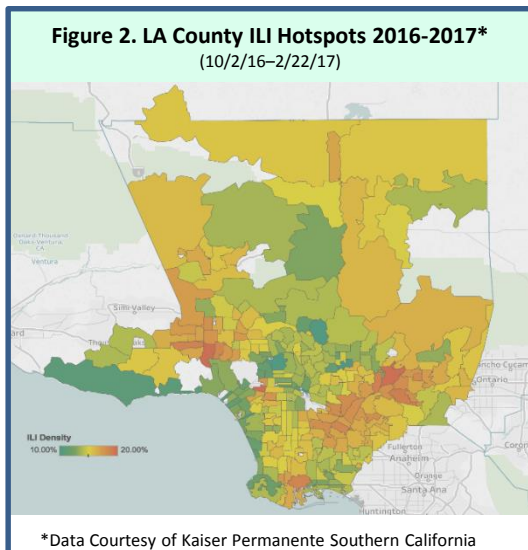


Figure 2. LA County ILI Hotspots 2016-2017* (10/2/16-2/22/17)

Influenza-Like Illness Hotspots in LA County

Even though influenza-like illness (ILI) has been widespread across Los Angeles County this season, several areas experienced greater levels of illness. Data courtesy of Kaiser Permanente of Southern California identified several hotspots of activity with the highest level of ILI, defined as the number of Kaiser Permanente (KP) patients diagnosed with ILI in an area divided by the number of KP members in that area. This season (from 10/2/16–2/22/17) the top three ILI hotspots by zip code were: Los Angeles (90035), Tarzana (91356), and Baldwin Park (91706). LAC DPH and KP urges everyone to take steps to limit the spread of influenza, such as staying home when ill and practicing healthy habits (washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes). This is especially important among those in areas with high disease activity.

Zip	City	ILI Density	Zip	City	ILI Density
90035	Los Angeles	21.27%	91367	Woodland Hills	18.87%
91356	Tarzana	20.13%	90744	Wilmington	18.74%
91706	Baldwin Park	19.91%	91316	Encino	18.58%
91744	La Puente	19.04%	90241	Downey	18.55%
91732	El Monte	18.89%	91723	Covina	18.34%

*Data Courtesy of Kaiser Permanente Southern California