

Flu Activity Low, But Increasing

During October, Los Angeles County (LAC) already is seeing sporadic cases of influenza (flu), and the number of confirmed cases has been increasing. To date in LAC, no flu-associated deaths have been reported (Table 1). In addition to low levels of flu, other respiratory viruses are circulating including rhinoviruses/enteroviruses which are most common in summer and fall.

While some illnesses from flu A 2009 H1N1 and flu B have been identified both locally and nationwide, early reports show flu A H3N2 to be the most commonly identified strain. [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.](#) During last year's season (2016-2017), A H3N2 was predominant and LAC experienced a moderately severe season with 80 confirmed flu-associated deaths, of these 61 (76%) of were aged 65 years or older (Figure 1). In addition, last season the LAC Department of Public Health (DPH) confirmed 32 flu-outbreaks in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), almost twice as many as the previous year which was an A H1N1 season. [LAC DPH has developed guidelines](#) to assist with flu prevention and outbreak management in vulnerable SNF settings. [Additional flu health education and outreach materials are available from LAC DPH.](#) DPH requires reporting of flu deaths in persons of [all ages](#) within 7 calendar days of identification. These reports can be submitted by phone (888-397-3993), [online](#), or by fax (888-397-3778).

This first *Influenza Watch* of the season is a reminder that if you haven't received your flu vaccination yet, now is the time to get it!

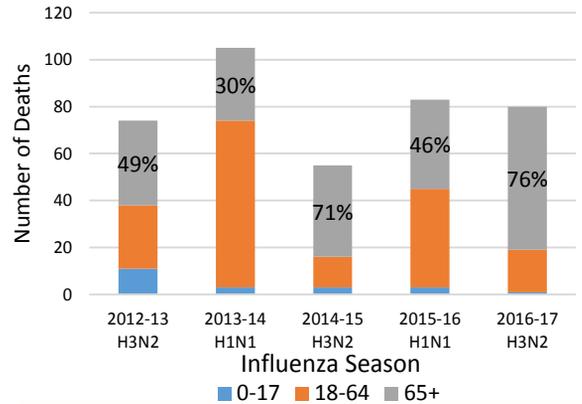
Table 1. Los Angeles County Influenza Surveillance Summary				
	2017-2018		2016-2017	
	Week 42*	YTD†	Week 42	YTD
Positive Flu Tests/ Total Tests (% Positive Flu Tests)	14/1,174 (1.2%)	156/7,623 (2.0%)	16/1,021 (1.6%)	76/7,046 (1.1%)
Percent Flu A/B	86/14	87/13	88/13	92/8
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	0	0	2
Influenza Confirmed Outbreaks	0	0	0	0
Pediatric Flu Deaths‡	0	0	0	0
Adult Flu Deaths	0	0	0	0

*For the 2017-2018 season, week 42 extends from 10/15/2017 to 10/21/2017.

†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.

Figure 1. Influenza Deaths by Age Group and Season LAC 2012-2017



Scare Away the Flu



Colds Versus Flu

Because the common cold and influenza (flu) are both respiratory illnesses that share similar symptoms, [it is easy to confuse the two](#). Flu differs from the common cold in that it comes on sudden and strong, is usually associated with a fever, and can result in serious health problems such as pneumonia. For some cases, it may be difficult to tell the difference between a cold and the flu based on symptoms alone, and health care providers may choose to use a [diagnostic test to guide treatment](#). Often, symptoms and clinical judgement, can guide diagnosis.

Follow these simple steps to help prevent the flu this Halloween!

- Do the "Dracula," cough and sneeze into your sleeve.
- Avoid masks that make kids more likely to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash your hands before eating candy.
- If you're sick, don't hand out candy. Instead, leave it on the doorstep.

Remember, you can also keep your children strong against the flu by:

- Getting vaccinated against seasonal flu
- Eating healthy food
- Exercising regularly
- Getting enough rest
- Washing hands with soap and warm water
- Staying home until 24 hours after fever ends
- Asking healthcare provider about antivirals if child has flu-like symptoms

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Website: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov> | LA County Info Line - Dial 2-1-1

