



The A.C.D. Quarterly

PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Influenza Prevention

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Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is a highly communicable respiratory tract virus that is found in several species of mammals, including humans. Two types of influenza cause the majority of illness in humans, influenza A and B. Influenza A can be further subtyped as H1 and H3 and is the cause for the most recent flu pandemics. Both types tend to occur seasonally, usually in the winter months of each hemisphere. Influenza is spread primarily through droplets aerosolized sneezing or coughing.

Influenza can be deadly. According to CDC, the flu is thought to cause between 3,000 and 49,000 deaths each year in the U.S. Certain people, such as young children, older adults, people with compromised immune systems or certain health conditions, and pregnant women are at greater risk for developing serious complications from the flu.

Prevention

There are several measures that can be taken to prevent influenza. Behaviors such as avoiding contact with sick persons can help reduce the chances of being exposed to the virus. Appropriate hygienic practices, such as washing hands with soap and water, use of hand sanitizer, avoidance of rubbing the nose or eyes, and covering one’s cough or sneeze can also help prevent the spread and acquisition of the virus.

Perhaps the single best measure to prevent the spread or acquisition of influenza and complications resulting from infection is by being vaccinated for the flu each year. The flu vaccine is comprised of two strains of influenza A and one strain of influenza B. The composition of this year’s flu vaccine remains the same as last season. Flu vaccine now comes in three different forms—an inactivated vaccine that is injected intramuscularly (also known as “the flu shot”) or intradermally (Fluzone Intradermal®), and a live attenuated influenza vaccine that is delivered as a nasal spray (FluMist®). All of these vaccines contain the same components, but dosages may differ as do the recommended ages for usage. Please consult the package inserts for detailed information.

Currently, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that all individuals 6 months or older be vaccinated for influenza. Children 6 months to 9 years who have never received a dose before are recommended to receive 2 doses, separated by one month, to fully develop an immune response. Individuals with an egg allergy, depending on the type of allergic reaction, may or may not be eligible to receive the vaccine. Despite this year’s flu vaccine being the same as last season, individuals are still recommended to get vaccinated as their immunity may have decreased since last year. For detailed information, please see ACIP’s updated influenza vaccine recommendations (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6033a3.htm).

What PDPH is doing to help the community

PDPH continues to offer flu vaccination clinics targeting select populations that have limited access to healthcare. The program is designed for adults 19 years and older who need to be vaccinated against influenza. These clinics, staffed by medical volunteers, are held throughout the city and flu shots are offered free of charge. For more information regarding these clinics, or to inquire about how to serve as a vaccination site or medical volunteer, please call the Flu Hotline at 215-685-6458, or visit www.phila.gov/health/DiseaseControl/shotschedule.html

PDPH recognizes that timely epidemiological information can help impact clinical decision making. As a result, PDPH is providing up-to-date surveillance information regarding influenza and other respiratory viruses circulating in the area on PDPH’s Health Information Portal (HIP). Also found on our HIP are guidelines for the control and prevention of influenza for various settings, including healthcare institutions, childcare facilities, and shelters. For more information, please visit hip.phila.gov.

Did you know?

The ability for the immune system to produce protective responses to infection declines with age. A systematic review of antibody response studies in 2006 demonstrated that elderly individuals respond more poorly than younger adults to the influenza vaccine¹. As a result, a high dose influenza vaccine was recently licensed for use in the U.S. for persons 65 years or older. Fluzone High dose® (Sanofi Pasteur) provides 4x the amount of influenza antigen in the vaccine and improves immunogenicity in those 65 years or older². Providers with a high proportion of elderly patients may wish to consider this option for influenza vaccinations.

1. Goodwin K, Viboud C, Simonsen L. Antibody response to influenza vaccination in the elderly: a quantitative review. *Vaccine* 2006; 24:1159-69.
2. Couch RB, Winokur P, Brady R. Safety and immunogenicity of a high dosage trivalent influenza vaccine among elderly subjects. *Vaccine* 2007; 25:7656-63.

Weekly Influenza Report: Survey Results

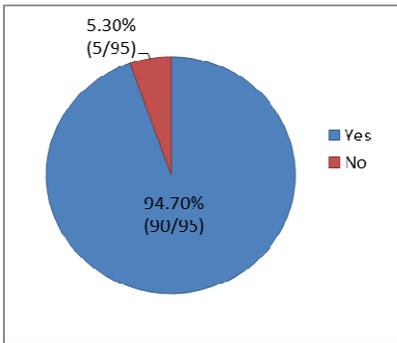
The Weekly Influenza Report is one way that PDPH works to regularly inform health care professionals about trends in influenza. The report provides a summary of influenza surveillance activity in Philadelphia through four systems and provides a brief overview of state and national activity as well as any pertinent new information regarding antiviral resistance, outbreaks, and clinical and infection prevention guidance. From our perspective it's an easy way for information to be regularly released to the health care community.

In order to understand the report's impact and elicit feedback regarding its format, a survey was conducted in August 2011. Of the 102 health professionals who responded to the survey, 58% (58/100) reported that they access the weekly influenza report through the Philadelphia Health Information Portal (hip.phila.gov). As seen in the graph below, the majority of respondents were physicians, followed by infection prevention practitioners and nurses. Of these individuals, 95% found the information from the Weekly Influenza Report to be beneficial to their overall careers. Twenty six percent of health care professionals read the report on a weekly basis and requests were made to continue the weekly release of the report during influenza season. This survey also showed that distribution within offices via co-workers was common, with 52% (50/97) sharing the report once they received it. To increase circulation, it is evident that the report should be distributed to multiple facilities. We learned that distribution of the report in laboratories should increase based on the small percentage of laboratorians who responded to the survey.

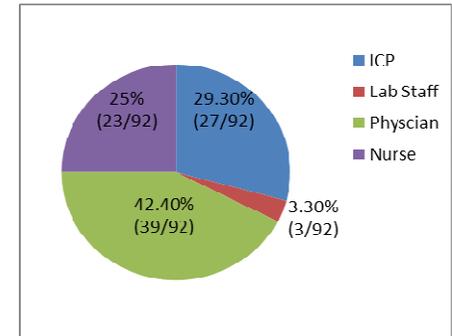
The results of the survey confirmed the importance of the Weekly Influenza Report, and will help us to streamline our distribution and increase our readership in the future.

Look out for the Weekly Influenza Report on the Health Information Portal; updates are typically posted on Thursday. You can also email acd@phila.gov if you prefer to receive the report in your email.

Did you find the data in the report to be useful and beneficial?



Respondent breakdown by profession



PDPH Offers Free In-Service Presentations to Providers

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control has developed an infection control in-service presentation for provider practices. We would like to come to your practice to review standard precautions, reportable diseases and disease reporting procedures with your providers and administrative staff. Our presentation is 30 minutes or less and we can present during office meetings, lunch breaks or before clinic time. If you are interested in an in-service at your practice, please contact Alanna Butler at 215-685-6750 or email alanna.butler@phila.gov

Thank you for your continued support of our disease surveillance and control efforts.

Guidelines for Norovirus and Influenza

There are 2011-2012 guidelines posted on the Health Information Portal for **Norovirus** and **Influenza** in the following settings:

- Institutional
- Childcare
- Schools
- Shelters
- Adult Daycare Settings

Go to: <https://hip.phila.gov/xv/DiseaseInformation/tabid/81/Default.aspx>

Please remember to report outbreaks and reportable disease and conditions to PDPH. Reporting requirements and forms are posted on hip.phila.gov.

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