



Philadelphia Department of Public Health Division of Disease Control

DONALD F. SCHWARZ, MD, MPH
Deputy Mayor, Health & Opportunity
Health Commissioner

NAN FEYLER, JD, MPH
Chief of Staff

CAROLINE C. JOHNSON, MD
Director, Division of Disease Control

Health Advisory

Respiratory Virus Surveillance Report – October 9, 2009

RHINOVIRUS ACTIVITY ELEVATED

Several laboratories in Philadelphia are reporting identification of rhinovirus in larger numbers of clinical specimens than normally observed at this time of year (Figure). In addition, emergency department visits for asthma and respiratory-related ailments are also increased beyond levels typically seen for this time of year. This surge in rhinovirus activity coincides with heightened scrutiny for re-emergence of H1N1 (swine) influenza locally.

Common symptoms of rhinovirus include rhinorrhea, sneezing, sore throat, sinusitis, laryngitis, and headache. Rhinovirus infection is an important trigger of asthma exacerbation in children, and less frequently, adults. More recently, evidence indicates that rhinovirus can be a cause of lower respiratory tract infections and acute febrile respiratory illness in humans.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza A (H1N1) are also beginning to circulate in Philadelphia, but at low levels.

Clinicians are advised to maintain a broad range of differential diagnoses for patients presenting with acute febrile respiratory illness, as not every case of influenza-like illness is the result of influenza. Commercial laboratories now offer a wide array of tests for the detection of viral respiratory pathogens, including polymerase chain reaction testing for influenza A (H1N1). Testing for a panel of respiratory pathogens should be especially considered in severe or hospitalized cases, fatal cases, or in outbreak situations where identification of the pathogen has implications for disease treatment or prevention.

For more information or to report institutional outbreaks of respiratory illness or severe, fatal, or pregnant cases of influenza, please contact DDC at (215) 685-6748 or visit the Health Information Portal (<https://hip.phila.gov>). Future health alerts will address treatment and testing for influenza and RSV.

Laboratory-Based Surveillance for Rhinovirus: Philadelphia, 2007/2008 through 2009/2010 Seasons

