



## HEALTH ALERT UPDATE: Influenza in Boston, 2006-07

**Summary:** Reported cases of influenza and emergency department visits for influenza-like illness have increased in Boston over the last several weeks. Boston-based health care providers are encouraged to continue offering influenza vaccine for eligible persons, and are reminded that all influenza cases identified by any laboratory test must be reported to the Boston Public Health Commission.

Figure 1. Reported Cases of Influenza, by week  
Boston, MA: Dec 2006 to Feb 2007

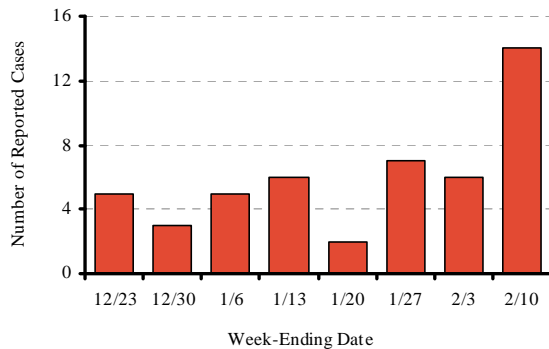
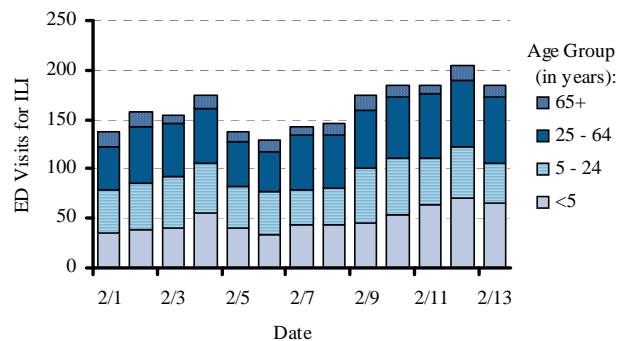


Figure 2. Boston Emergency Department (ED) Visits  
for Influenza-like Illness, February 1- 14, 2007



### Epidemiology

Since February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 the Boston Public Health Commission has observed an increase in reported cases of influenza and emergency department visits for influenza-like illness across all age groups and in all Boston neighborhoods. Overall levels of flu-like illness remains below seasonal averages based on previous years' surveillance data. No outbreaks or clusters of influenza like illness have been identified. No change has been observed in pneumonia and influenza-related mortality.

### Diagnosis & Prevention

Health care providers should consider the diagnosis of influenza in persons who present with symptoms including fever and cough or sore throat not attributable to another etiology. Influenza vaccine is still available for persons who may be at high risk for influenza or who may wish to reduce their chances of becoming ill. In addition, good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene are known to reduce the risk of transmission of many respiratory infections and should be encouraged. Educational posters, fact sheets in multiple languages, and more general information are available on the BPHC website: [www.bphc.org/flu](http://www.bphc.org/flu).

### Reporting

City and state regulations require that influenza cases confirmed by any laboratory test in Boston be reported to the Boston Public Health Commission. Reporting forms for health care providers and laboratories can be found at [www.bphc.org/cdc](http://www.bphc.org/cdc).