



2010-11 Influenza Season Update - January 2011

Summary: As of Jan 1st, 2011, influenza-like illness (ILI) is accounting for 2.0% of all ED visits in Boston, an increase of 82% from Dec 4th, 2010. Children under the age of 5 years have the highest proportion of ED visits related to ILI. Of note, increased influenza activity in children in a community often precedes that in adults. This season, influenza vaccine is recommended for all persons age 6 months and older. The trivalent influenza vaccine provides protection against an influenza A H1N1 strain, an influenza A H3N2 strain, and an influenza B strain. Vaccine is still available from BPHC; call (617) 534-5611 to request vaccine.

BPHC would like to remind Boston-based healthcare providers that all cases of influenza, confirmed by any rapid or laboratory test, as well as clusters of illness must be reported to BPHC.

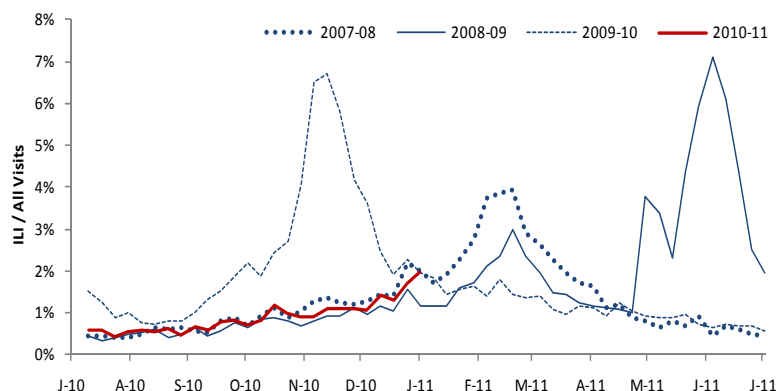


Figure. Percent of visits to Boston emergency departments for influenza-like illness, 2007-present.

Epidemiology

Influenza-like illness (ILI) has been increasing steadily for the past three weeks and now accounts for 2.0% of all ED visits. All age groups except adults 65 and older are showing increased ILI activity based on BPHC's ED-based syndromic surveillance. In children under 5 years of age, ILI is currently responsible for 6.9% of age-specific visits. In addition, reported cases of laboratory confirmed influenza have increased significantly over the past two weeks. Of reported cases, 27% are < 5 years of age, and 21% are 5-17 years old.

Diagnosis

Healthcare providers should consider the diagnosis of influenza in persons who present with symptoms including fever, myalgias, headache, malaise, dry cough, and sore throat, not attributable to another etiology. Symptomatic patients should be encouraged to limit contact with others for at least 24 hours after their fever resolves without the use of antipyretic medications. For most people, this will be a minimum of 4 days.

Prevention

Influenza vaccine is still available and recommended for all persons age 6 months and older who do not have a specific contraindication to the vaccine. For information on how to receive free vaccine, please call BPHC at (617) 534-5611. Good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene are also known to reduce the risk of transmission of many

respiratory infections and should be promoted. As always, healthcare workers are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated for influenza to prevent transmission to their patients. Educational fact sheets in multiple languages, guidance for influenza vaccine among healthcare workers and more general information are available on the BPHC website: www.bphc.org/cdc.

Reporting

City and state regulations require that all laboratory confirmed cases of influenza diagnosed in Boston be reported to the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC). Outbreaks of disease in the city regardless of etiology must also be reported to BPHC. In addition, laboratories in Boston are required to report positive influenza test results to BPHC. Reporting forms for health care providers and laboratories can be found at www.bphc.org/cdc. Further information is available by contacting the BPHC Communicable Disease Control Division at 617-534-5611.

Additional Resources

BPHC website: <http://www.bphc.org/flu>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/epii/flu/seasonal.htm>

CDC Influenza Surveillance: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm>