



News Articles, Infectious Diseases, Influenza, Vaccine/Immunization

CDC urges vaccination for flu as hospitalizations rise

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Flu-related hospitalizations are on the rise as the season appears to be reaching its peak, health officials said Friday.

"We are currently in the midst of a very active **flu** season as much of the country is experiencing widespread and intense flu activity," said Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D.

Influenza A (H3N2) strains have been most common, often a sign of a season with more severe illness. Last week, the **hospitalization rate** for flu was 22.7 per 100,000 people, up from 13.7 the week before. However, officials noted it is not as high as the 29.9 per 100,000 seen in the 2014-'15 season.

Young children, pregnant women and the elderly are especially vulnerable to flu complications. Twenty children have died from the flu this season.

While the season may be peaking, there are 11-13 weeks left so people still need to protect themselves, according to Dan Jernigan, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Influenza Division of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. The CDC and Academy **recommend vaccinations** for everyone 6 months and older.

"While our flu vaccines are far from perfect, they are the best way to prevent getting sick from the flu, and it is not too late to get one," Dr. Fitzgerald said.

The CDC believes vaccine effectiveness will track closely to last year, which was 32% for H3 viruses and 39% for all strains. Officials said they believe these estimates to be more accurate than reports of 10% effectiveness, which were based on data from Australia.

To help prevent the spread of flu, Dr. Fitzgerald recommends people cover their mouth when they cough, wash their hands frequently, avoid people who are sick and stay home when they are sick.

Antiviral drugs can lessen flu symptoms and shorten the duration of the illness. The CDC is working with manufacturers to address small pockets of shortages in some areas.

Resources

- [AAP policy "Recommendations for Prevention and Control of Influenza in Children," 2017 - 2018](#)
- [Information from the CDC about flu](#)
- [Information for parents on flu vaccine from HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [AAP News stories on flu](#)