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WEEKLY FLU NEWS

February 17, 2020



CDC: Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report: Week 6, Ending Feb. 8, 2020

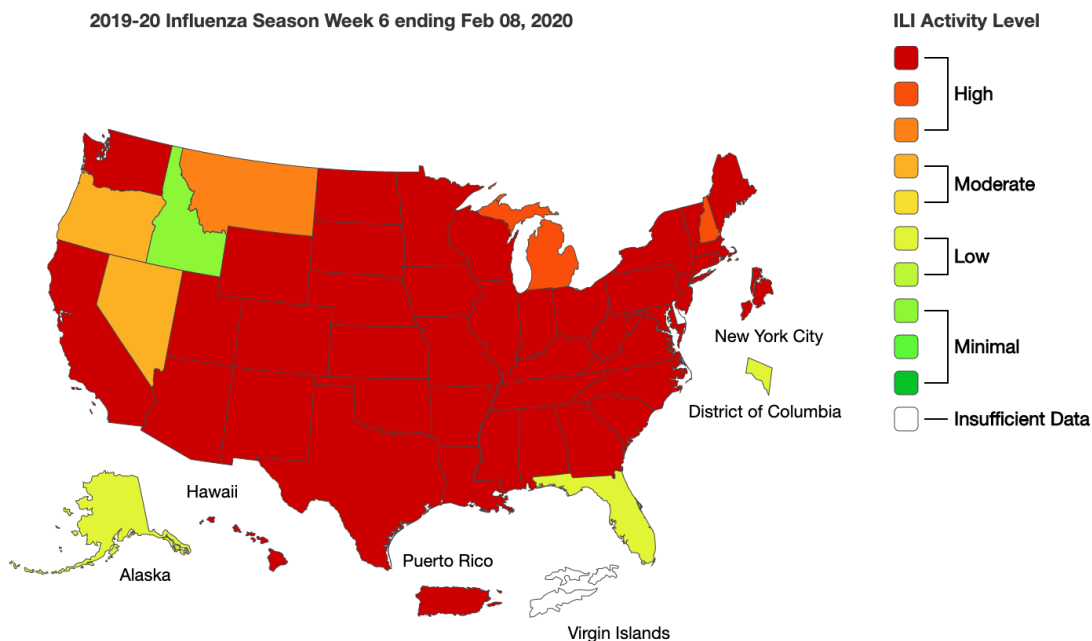
Feb. 14, 2020; [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

- Seasonal flu activity in the United States is high and, after falling during the first two weeks of the year, increased over the last four weeks.
- 30.8% of specimens from clinical laboratories tested positive for influenza.
- Nationally, influenza B/Victoria viruses and H1N1 viruses are most common this season. There have been continued increases in H1N1 viruses in recent weeks. Predominant viruses vary by region and age group.
- 6.8% of visits to a health care provider were for influenza-like illness. All 10 regions were above their baselines and continuing to increase.
- The overall hospitalization rate is 41.9 per 100,000, which is similar to past seasons at this time.
- 6.8% of deaths were attributed to pneumonia and influenza, which is below the epidemic threshold.
- Fourteen new pediatric flu deaths were reported for the 2019-2020 season during week 5. The total for the season is 92.

Week Ending Feb 08, 2020 - Week 6



2019-20 Influenza Season Week 6 ending Feb 08, 2020



2019-2020 U.S. Flu Season: Preliminary Burden Estimates

Feb. 14, 2020, CDC

CDC estimates that, from October 1, 2019, through February 8, 2020, there have been:

- 26 - 36 million flu illnesses
- 12 - 17 million flu medical visits
- 250,000 - 440,000 flu hospitalizations
- 14,000 - 36,000 flu deaths



Amid Coronavirus Response, Officials Careful Not to Compromise Influenza Efforts

Feb. 12, 2020; [Morning Consult](#)

Against the backdrop of the coronavirus outbreak, health experts and drugmakers across the world are working on the development of the seasonal influenza vaccine for the 2020-2021 flu season. Although the production of the vaccine is a continuous, year-round effort for pharmaceutical companies, the process kicks into high gear Feb. 24, when top officials from five World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centres for Reference and Research on Influenza meet in Geneva to write recommendations on viruses for inclusion in the upcoming vaccine.

After the WHO issues recommendations by a target date of Feb. 28, a Food and Drug Administration advisory committee will convene March 4 to reach a final decision on strain selection — launching the U.S. manufacturing process for pharmaceutical companies.



Hand hygiene at airports can play key role in slowing spread of disease, study suggests

Feb. 13, 2020; [MinnPost](#)

If more people at airports would practice better personal hygiene — particularly keeping their hands clean — the spread of many contagious diseases could be slowed significantly, according to researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In a study published in the journal *Risk Analysis*, the researchers estimate that if just 60 percent of travelers passing through the world's airports kept their hands clean, the risk of a potential infectious disease pandemic would decrease by almost 70 percent.

Modern forms of transportation, particularly air travel, allow people to travel more often and across greater distances. In 2017, 4.1 billion individuals passed through airports, a number that is expected to reach 7.8 billion by 2036. Airports, therefore, have acquired a key role in the spread of contagious diseases, especially viral diseases like the flu.



Amid the coronavirus outbreak, China is now also fighting deadly bird flu in chickens

Feb. 10, 2020; [Business Insider](#)

China has reported an animal outbreak of the deadly H5N1 bird flu in chickens in the Hunan province, an area that borders the province where the coronavirus emerged. "The farm has 7,850 chickens, and 4,500 of the chickens have died from the contagion. Local authorities have culled 17,828 poultry after the outbreak," a statement by China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said on February 1.

However, the outbreak is a cause for concern because this avian flu has a 60% mortality rate among infected humans, according to WHO. Additionally, the H5N1 bird flu can cause

severe respiratory illness, including pneumonia, and neurological changes such as an altered mental state and seizures.

"If the H5N1 virus were to change and become easily transmissible from person to person while retaining its capacity to cause severe disease, the consequences for public health could be very serious," WHO said in a statement.



When viruses like flu and coronavirus kill, pneumonia often delivers the fatal blow

Feb. 14, 2020; [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

When people die of the flu — or the new coronavirus now called COVID-19 — it's often a lung infection or pneumonia that actually leads to the death.

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can be caused by viruses, fungi or, most often, bacteria. Inflammation causes the tiny air sacs in lungs to fill with fluid, making it difficult to breathe and get oxygen into the blood. Often, the bacteria that cause these infections are covered by pneumococcal vaccines, which are recommended for children under age 2, adults 65 and older and some people in between.

In a worst-case scenario for pneumonia, people die because the damage to their lungs is so severe that even mechanical ventilation can't get enough oxygen into the body.



What Every Parent Needs to Know About Tamiflu

Feb. 12, 2020; [SELF](#)

If you or your kids get the flu, your doctor might prescribe Tamiflu or another antiviral medication. But people seem to have questions about this—particularly Tamiflu for kids. Some may just be unfamiliar with it (especially if you never took it growing up), while others may be hesitant in the same way they're vaccine hesitant (which is a growing and increasingly dangerous trend).

Although Tamiflu can be effective in treating and even preventing the flu in people who have been exposed, it's clear that some parents have concerns about it. It's completely understandable for parents to be worried about the safety of any drug they're considering giving their children, but it's also important to clear up misinformation that might stop people from using this medication when it could be helpful. Here, SELF dug through available data and talked to a doctor who specializes in pediatric infectious diseases to get answers to your most likely questions about Tamiflu for kids.



Older Patients At Higher Risk of Complications from Flu

Feb. 16, 2020; [MD Magazine](#)

This influenza (flu) season, patients >65 years old make up 62% of reported A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses, according to the most recent US Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) weekly influenza surveillance report. Less than 13% of influenza positive specimens reported by public health laboratories were from adults of that population.

Over the last few years, between 70-85% of seasonal flu-related deaths have been in adults >65 years old, according to the CDC. And 50-70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations occurred in patients in this population. This year alone, adults >65 years old had the highest hospitalization rate at 101.6 per 100,000.



We're excited to announce the launch of our new blog, **Insights on Influenza!**

Want to learn more about flu? Check out our new **blog** featuring evidence-based articles on various flu-related topics, including flu prevention, flu news & surveillance, flu vaccine information, flu facts, and more! We plan on developing new blog articles twice a month to share in-depth flu-related information in an effort to help others learn more about flu prevention and treatment. Interested in a particular blog topic? Let us know by reaching out to us at contact@familiesfightingflu.org.



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