

Flu B Lingering into the Spring

Influenza activity in Los Angeles County (LAC) peaked in January and is currently low however flu viruses continue to circulate, predominantly type B. Sentinel laboratory results show 3.8% (12/313) positive flu activity last week, the majority type B. Since mid-March influenza B has been the dominant strain circulating in LAC. Other parts of the nation are experiencing an increase in flu B and the CDC warns that these infections can be just as severe as flu A ([New CDC Study Compares Severity of Illness Caused by Flu A and B Viruses](#)). This week a flu B associated flu death was reported bringing the total to 4 flu B deaths in LAC this season (98 total). Last season 15 out of 70 influenza-associated deaths in LAC were linked to type B. It is not uncommon for multiple viral strains to circulate each season. This is one of the benefits of vaccination since it provides protections against multiple flu strains. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health would like to remind health care providers to continue to include flu testing in their evaluation of patients presenting with influenza-like-illness in order to administer the proper treatment.

Table 1. LA County Surveillance Summary 2013-2014

LA County Surveillance Summary	Week 19 5/4/14-5/10/14	2013-14 YTD (9/1/13-Present)
Positive Flu Tests/Total Tests† (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	12/313 (3.8%)	3,867/37,654 (10.3%)
Percent Flu A/B	17/83	93/7
Community Respiratory Outbreaks Influenza confirmed outbreaks††	0 0	13 2
Pediatric Flu Deaths	0	4
Adult Flu Deaths, confirmed†††	1	94
Total	1	98

†Sentinel sites (9 participating) ††Associated with at least one positive influenza lab test
†††Confirmed influenza death is defined by a positive lab test, compatible symptoms, and clear progression from illness to death
Note: LA County tracks flu deaths of all ages, CA State reports on those <65 years only

Flu B Viruses Match to Vaccine

The CDC reports that 70% of tested flu B viruses belong to the B/Yamagata lineage (B/Massachusetts/02/2012-like) that was included in this year's seasonal trivalent vaccine and was recommended by WHO for inclusion in the 2014-2015 vaccine. The other 30% belong to the B/Victoria lineage (B/Brisbane/60/2008-like) that was included in this year's quadrivalent vaccine and is recommended by WHO for inclusion in the 2014-2015 quadrivalent vaccine.

The Common Cold is Still Spreading

As flu activity declines other respiratory viruses that cause the common cold continue to circulate well into the Spring. Figure 1 shows increase in activity of rhinovirus/enterovirus and respiratory syncytial virus which are known culprits of the common cold whose symptoms include sore throat, runny nose, coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, headaches and body aches. Unfortunately there is no cure for a cold as antibiotics are not effective against viruses, however over the counter medications may help relieve symptoms.

**Figure 1. Respiratory Viruses, LA County 2013-2014
Percent Positive Cases by MMWR Week**

