

## **Bureau of Laboratories 2016 Influenza Surveillance**

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The start of the 2016-17 flu season is here, and we have already seen sporadic flu activity in the State of Michigan. The first official week of the flu season was October 2 - 8, 2016. During this week, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) confirmed the first two cases of influenza for this season as human seasonal influenza A/H3.

Influenza associated hospitalizations and associated pediatric mortality are listed on the 2016 Nationally Notifiable Conditions. The Sentinel Physician and Sentinel Laboratory Programs, consisting of medical providers and laboratory sites from different locations throughout Michigan, provide surveillance data for influenza activity. While participation in this program is voluntary, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and MDHHS BOL highly encourage continual participation from all sentinel providers.

Influenza surveillance plays a critical role in vaccine production for this preventable illness. The World Health Organization (WHO) makes recommendations based upon the CDC's Influenza Registry statistics which is comprised of surveillance information provided by state epidemiology reports culminated from influenza activity reported by the Sentinel Physician and Sentinel Laboratory Programs. This year the WHO made their recommendation for the 2017 Southern Hemisphere Influenza Vaccine to include the A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1) strain. This is the first year the A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) strain has not been recommended for the flu vaccine composition since the 2009 pandemic.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory virus that can set off many physical maladies including fever, sore throat, cough, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, and fatigue. Persons infected with the virus can spread it to others even before they feel sick.

Annual influenza vaccination is the single best way to prevent catching the "flu" and its associated complications. Injectable vaccines were exclusively recommended this 2016-2017 season. The vaccine "Flu Mist" or "nasal spray" was not recommended due to low vaccine effectiveness. Everyone 6 months of age and older should receive an influenza vaccine every year. Influenza is an illness that should be taken seriously. Serious complications and death are inherent risks from contracting the virus.

All persons are encouraged to receive an influenza vaccine not only to protect themselves, but to protect their families and their communities.