2018-2019 Influenza Season Update for Week 9*
(The week ending on Saturday, March 2, 2019)

Key Points
✓ Classification of Connecticut geographic activity remains at widespread** for week 9.
✓ Influenza activity may have peaked but remains elevated nationally and within Connecticut.
✓ Influenza A viruses are the predominate type circulating; very few flu B viruses are now being reported.
✓ The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recent reports on the percentage of people nationally seeing their health care provider with influenza-like-illness (ILI) is currently 5.0%, above the national baseline of 2.2% for elevated ILI activity.
✓ There is still time for you and your family to obtain your flu vaccine and take steps to prevent influenza-related illness and hospitalization: https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Immunizations/Seasonal-Influenza

The Department of Public Health (DPH) uses multiple surveillance systems to monitor circulating flu viruses throughout the year. Data are updated with available information each week starting in October and ending in May. Consider current week data preliminary due to delays in reporting and confirmation.

- The percentage of statewide emergency department visits attributed to the “fever/flu syndrome” has decreased from 9.3% in week 8 to 8.4% in week 9 (Figure 1). Caution should be used when comparing the 2018-2019 EpiCenter syndromic surveillance data to 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Hospital Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance System data†.

- The percentage of outpatient visits with influenza-like illness (ILI) has recently increased to 5.2%, above the level of 1% generally considered the minimum threshold for elevated influenza-associated visits in the outpatient setting in Connecticut (Figure 2).

- To date, a total of 2,118 hospitalized patients with laboratory-confirmed influenza admitted during the current season (August 26 to March 2, 2019) have been reported. Of these, 1,829 were associated with type A (subtype unspecified), 199 influenza A (2009 H1N1), 57 influenza A (H3N2), and 33 influenza B viruses (Figures 3 & 4).

- Three flu-associated deaths were reported in week 9, resulting in a total of 40 deaths reported in Connecticut during this flu season so far. Thirty-four flu-associated deaths were associated with influenza A (unspecified), 4 with influenza A (2009 H1N1), 1 with influenza A (H3N2), and 1 with influenza B. Of the 40 total reported flu-associated deaths, 25 occurred in persons >65 years of age, 11 in persons 50-64 years of age, 3 in persons 25-49 years of age, and 1 in an individual 5-17 years of age.

- A total of 6,104 influenza positive laboratory tests have been reported during the current season: New Haven (1,892), Hartford County (1,399), Fairfield (1,239), New London (435), Middlesex (357), Litchfield (353), Windham (210), Tolland (110), and 109 in currently unknown counties. Of the 6,104 total positive reports, 5,139 were influenza A (subtype unspecified), 700 influenza A (2009 H1N1), 142 influenza A (H3N2), and 123 influenza B (Figures 5 & 6).

- Three additional figures are included in this week’s update. Since 2003, the Connecticut Emerging Infections Program (EIP) at the Yale School of Public Health conducts active surveillance for laboratory-
confirmed, influenza-associated hospitalizations as part of the national FluSurv-NET system. EIP staff work with the Connecticut Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local hospitals to conduct surveillance for hospitalized cases of influenza among residents of New Haven and Middlesex Counties. Together with other FluSurv-NET sites, these data provide near real time estimates of influenza severity in the US: https://publichealth.yale.edu/eip/projects/flu.aspx.

- Figure 7 displays total New Haven and Middlesex County resident hospitalizations by MMWR week* and age category (includes preliminary counts for week 10 as of March 6, 2019). Please note that the vast majority of hospitalizations are among residents greater than 65 years of age.
- Figure 8 displays total New Haven and Middlesex County resident hospitalizations by MMWR week* and flu type (includes preliminary counts for week 10 as of March 6, 2019). The majority of hospitalizations among New Haven and Middlesex County residents are associated with influenza A infections.
- Figure 9 compares the current 2018-2019 influenza season New Haven and Middlesex County resident hospitalizations with those of the previous two influenza seasons (2017-2018 and 2016-2017).

* Week numbers refer to the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report calendar used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for national disease surveillance.
** Definitions for the estimated levels of geographic spread of influenza activity available at: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/overview.htm
† The EpiCenter system replaced the Hospital Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance System; 18 additional emergency department facilities send data to the EpiCenter.
*Caution should be used when comparing EpiCenter surveillance data to 2016-17 and 2017-18 Hospital Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance system data.
Figure 3. Hospitalized Patients (n = 2118) with Positive Lab Tests by Subtype & Week, Connecticut, through 3/2/2019

Figure 4. Hospitalized Patients (n = 2118) with Positive Laboratory Tests by Influenza Subtype and Age Group, Connecticut, through 3/2/2019
Figure 5. Positive Laboratory Tests (n = 6104) by Influenza Subtype and Week, Connecticut, through 3/2/2019

Figure 6. Proportion of Cumulative Positive Laboratory Tests (n = 6104) by Influenza Subtype, Connecticut, through 3/2/2019
Figure 9: Influenza Hospitalizations, New Haven and Middlesex Counties
CT Emerging Infections Program,
2016-17 through 2018-19 (preliminary through 3/6/2019)
Influenza Surveillance System Definitions

The EpiCenter System: This system receives near real-time reports on ED visits from all 38 licensed, hospital emergency departments in Connecticut. Data include a description of the chief complaint, or reason for visit, including fever/flu. The EpiCenter system replaced the Hospital Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance system (HEDSS). During 2017-2018, 18 additional emergency department facilities began sending data to the EpiCenter, and caution should be used when comparing EpiCenter surveillance data to historical HEDSS data.

Sentinel Provider Surveillance: Reporting of influenza-like illness (ILI) is conducted through a statewide network of volunteer outpatient providers known as ILINet. The proportion of patients exhibiting ILI is reported to the DPH on a weekly basis. ILI is defined as a cough and/or sore throat in the absence of a known cause, and the presence of a fever ≥100°F.

Influenza-associated Hospitalizations and/or Deaths: Providers are required to report influenza-associated hospitalizations and influenza-associated deaths, they are not required to report any positive influenza test results. Data collected describe the more serious illnesses associated with influenza infections.

Laboratory Surveillance. In Connecticut, positive influenza results are reportable by the laboratory conducting the test. Rapid antigen results are only reportable by laboratories with electronic file reporting. These results are used to determine what types, subtypes, and strains are circulating.

Hospitalizations in residents of New Haven and Middlesex Counties: Three new figures are included in this week’s update. Since 2003, the Connecticut Emerging Infections Program at the Yale School of Public Health conducts active surveillance for laboratory-confirmed, influenza-associated hospitalizations as part of the national FluSurv-NET system. EIP staff work with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and local hospitals to conduct surveillance for hospitalized cases of influenza among residents of southern Connecticut. Together with other FluSurv-NET sites, these data provide near real time estimates of influenza severity in the US:
https://publichealth.yale.edu/eip/projects/flu.aspx