Influenza activity remains very low to date this season in San Diego County. This is very likely due to the social distancing, hand washing, and mask wearing interventions instituted to reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Deaths due to COVID-19 pneumonia have significantly increased in December, reflected in the increased percentage of deaths registered with pneumonia. Flu vaccination is still recommended.

Current Week 51 (ending 12/19/2020)
• 5 new influenza detections reported
• No influenza-related deaths reported
• 4% influenza-like illness (ILI) among emergency department visits
• 18% of death certificates registered with pneumonia and/or influenza

Influenza season is July 1 – June 30, Weeks 27-26. Previous weeks case counts or percentages may change due to delayed processing or reporting.


**At least one case of laboratory-confirmed influenza in a setting experiencing two or more cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) within a 72-hour period.


^Current FY deaths are shown by week of report; by week of death for prior FYs. Total deaths reported in prior seasons: 343 in 2017-18, 77 in 2018-19, and 108 in 2019-20.
Influenza Vaccination Prevents Illnesses, Hospitalizations, and Deaths

Each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the number of illnesses, medical visits, hospitalizations, and deaths due to influenza in the United States. In addition, CDC estimates the burden of influenza that was averted by seasonal influenza vaccination using a model with vaccine coverage and vaccine effectiveness. The estimates for the 2019-2020 influenza season were published in October and are summarized in the infographic above. Further description of the methods and the estimates of burden averted by influenza vaccination during the 2019–20 season are available here.

Table 2. Influenza Cases Reported, 2020-2021 Season*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Test Type/Subtype</th>
<th>Week 51</th>
<th>Week 50</th>
<th>Total to Date</th>
<th>Percent to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influenza A, subtype unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza A (H3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza B, subtype unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza B/Victoria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza B/Yamagata</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza, type unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Season is July 1- June 30, Weeks 27-26.
Influenza Activity Indicator:
The activity level compares the current week’s ED ILI% (emergency department influenza-like illness, percent of all visits) to the mean and number of standard deviations above of the mean of the ED ILI% in non-influenza season weeks (CDC disease weeks 27-39) from the current and prior four seasons.

There are 10 activity levels, classified as: Minimal (levels 1-3), Low (levels 4-5), Moderate (levels 6-7), and High (levels 8-10). An activity level of 1 corresponds to when the ED ILI% is below the mean; level 2 corresponds to when the ED ILI% is less than 1 standard deviation above the mean; level 3 corresponds to when the ED ILI% is more than 1 but less than 2 standard deviations above the mean, and so on, with an activity level of 10 corresponding to when the ED ILI% is at 8 or more standard deviations above the mean.
Figure 2. San Diego County Influenza Detections by Type and Week of Report, 2020-21 Season to Date (N=51).

Figure 3. Cumulative Influenza Cases Reported by CDC Week and Season.
**Figure 4. Proportion of Influenza Cases by Age Group and Season.**

- **Percent**
  - 0
  - 10
  - 20
  - 30
  - 40
  - 50
  - 60
  - 70
  - 80
  - 90
  - 100

- **Year**
  - 2016-17
  - 2017-18
  - 2018-19
  - 2019-20
  - 2020-21 FYTD

- **Age Group**
  - <1 year
  - 1-17 years
  - 18-64 years
  - 65-79 years
  - 80+ years

**Figure 5. Number of Influenza Vaccinations Administered* by CDC Week and Season.**

**Season Total**
- 2016-2017: 601,156
- 2017-2018: 770,058
- 2018-2019: 960,238
- 2019-2020: 1,234,474
- 2020-2021 FYTD: 1,092,643

* Influenza vaccinations administered and entered into the San Diego Immunization Registry (SDIR). Week 52 data is repeated for week 53 for seasons that do not include week 53.
Figure 6. Percent of Emergency Department Visits for ILI Chief Complaint by CDC Week and Season*.

Figure 7. Percent of Emergency Department Visit Chief Complaints for Cough, Cold, Fever, or Respiratory Symptoms* by CDC Week, 2020-21 Season to Date.

* Respiratory category includes cough, cold symptoms, influenza-like illness, and other respiratory symptoms.
Figure 8. Percent of San Diego County Emergency Department Visits for Influenza-like Illness by CDC Week and Season Compared to 5-Year Baseline and Upper 95% Threshold Values (Serfling Method).

Figure 9. Percent of San Diego County Deaths Registered with Pneumonia and/or Influenza by CDC Week and Season Compared to Prior 5-Year Baseline and Upper 95% Threshold Values (Serfling Method).
Figure 10. Influenza Deaths by Type and Season.

Figure 11. Percent of Influenza Deaths by Age Group, Vaccination Status, and Underlying Medical Condition, 2020-21 Season.
Individual influenza cases are now reportable to Public Health as of October 1, 2019. Please report laboratory-positive influenza results to the County Epidemiology Unit by FAX (858) 715-6458 using a Confidential Morbidity Report Form, or an Influenza Case Report Form, and/or a copy of the laboratory results. Also, please indicate if the patient died and/or is a resident of a congregate living facility (if known).

Influenza specimens may be sent to Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for confirmation and subtyping. Please contact PHL at (619) 692-8500 before submitting or for questions and use the current PHL Test Request Form found at https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/PHS/phs_laboratory/. Contact the Epidemiology Unit by telephone (619) 692-8499 or email (EpiDiv.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov) with questions about influenza data. Influenza outbreaks should be reported by telephone to (619) 692-8499.

Resource Links
- County of San Diego Epidemiology Unit www.sdepi.org
- County of San Diego 2019-20 Influenza Season Summary
- Influenza Watch Slide Deck – A slide version of this report for presentations
- County of San Diego Immunization Unit (SDIZ) www.sdz.org
- San Diego Regional Immunization Registry (SDIR) http://www.sdz.org/CAIR-SDIR/index.html
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Influenza Update
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Influenza Surveillance

The following sources of data are used to produce this report:

- **Influenza case reports:** Medical providers and laboratories report individual cases of confirmed influenza via fax or electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) to Public Health Services Epidemiology Unit (Epidemiology).
- **Influenza deaths:** Hospital infection control professionals report influenza-related deaths. Pediatric flu deaths (under 18 years of age) are legally reportable in California; however, San Diego County requests that all influenza-related deaths be reported for surveillance purposes. Influenza-related deaths are also identified through death certificate registration. The County Office of Vital Records notifies Epidemiology when a new death is registered with influenza listed as a cause of death or underlying condition. In addition, influenza case reports are compared to death data for San Diego County, and matches are evaluated to determine if their influenza infection was related to the cause of death.
- **Percent pneumonia and influenza deaths:** The percentage of all deaths registered that had either pneumonia and/or influenza listed as a cause of death is obtained directly from the Vital Records VRIS data system on a weekly basis.
- **Influenza-like illness (ILI):** Electronic emergency department (ED) visit data is submitted to Epidemiology daily for 16 hospitals in San Diego County. The percent of ED visits for ILI or flu (based on chief complaints or diagnosis) is calculated for each week. Note: ILI is defined as fever (>100°F or 37.8°C) and cough and/or sore throat, in the absence of a known cause.
- **Influenza outbreaks:** In a congregate living setting, outbreaks are defined as at least one laboratory-confirmed influenza in the setting of a cluster (≥2 cases) of influenza-like illness (ILI) within a 72-hour period. Influenza outbreaks are reportable in California. Epidemiology identifies outbreaks when facilities call to report. Other potential outbreaks are identified when multiple cases share an address or have a residential address that matches a skilled nursing or long-term care facility.
- **Number of vaccines:** The San Diego Immunization Registry (SDIR) provides weekly updates on the number of flu vaccinations given based on the number of flu vaccinations registered by participating providers.

The purpose of the weekly Influenza Watch is to summarize current influenza surveillance in San Diego County. *Please note that reported weekly data are preliminary and may change due to delayed submissions and additional laboratory results.*