

## International influenza update

Globally, influenza activity remained lower than expected for this time of year. Worldwide, influenza B detections accounted for the majority of the low number of detections reported.

## Influenza in the US

Flu activity was unusually low through thought the 2020-2021 flu season in the US and globally, despite high levels of testing. This was likely a result of COVID-19 mitigation factors such as wearing face masks, staying home, hand washing, reduced travel, physical distancing, and potentially influenza vaccine, though efficacy estimates are not available.

## Non-seasonal influenza

In the US, five cases of human variant influenza, or influenza that circulates in swine, were detected during the 2020-21 season.

## Non-influenza respiratory viruses

- Throughout the summer months and continuing now, RSV has circulated at higher than expected levels throughout Maine and the US.
- Maine relies on voluntary reporting through the National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (<https://www.cdc.gov/surveillance/nrevss/>) to monitor circulating respiratory viruses such as adenovirus, parainfluenza, RSV, and rhinovirus.
- Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) can test for many of the circulating non-influenza respiratory viruses. For more information see [www.mainepublichealth.gov/lab](http://www.mainepublichealth.gov/lab).

## Additional Notes

- Any hospital that is experiencing a surge in inpatients and would like to request a statewide bed availability poll can contact their Health Care Coalition Chapter Coordinator or the State Bed Availability Coordinator to make the request:
  - Central Maine HCC: Hannah James ([hannahj@allclearm.org](mailto:hannahj@allclearm.org))
  - Southern Maine HCC: Allyssa Caron ([allyssac@allclearm.org](mailto:allyssac@allclearm.org))
  - State Bed Availability Coordinator: Nate Riethmann ([nathaniel.riethmann@maine.gov](mailto:nathaniel.riethmann@maine.gov))
- This season, Maine CDC will open Optional Influenza Surveillance Enhancement (OISE) project participation to any interested outpatient facility. The goal of this national project is to determine causes of acute respiratory illness throughout Maine.
  - Providers will systematically swab patients presenting to outpatient facilities with acute respiratory illness, send the swabs to HETL for SARS-CoV-2 and influenza testing and provide minimal symptom and demographic information.
  - Negative specimens will be tested against a respiratory viral panel.
  - All materials and testing will be provided free of charge.
  - A monthly summary of project findings will be provided.
  - Please email [influenza.dhhs@maine.gov](mailto:influenza.dhhs@maine.gov) for additional information if your facility is interested in participating.

## Questions

Q: What is the deadline for Healthcare workers to get the seasonal flu vaccine?

A: There is no required cut-off date. Each facility should come up with a policy for this deadline that ensures all healthcare workers are vaccinated per guidelines. The recommendation is no later than November 1<sup>st</sup>. More information on immunization requirements for healthcare workers can be found at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/providers/documents/Immunization%20Requirements%20for%20Healthcare%20Workers.pdf>

Q: What are the vaccination recommendations for different age groups?

A: Everyone six months of age and older should get a yearly flu vaccine. Children 6 months through 8 years of age, receiving the flu shot for the first time or those who have only previously gotten one dose of vaccine in this age range, should get two doses of vaccine this season—spaced at least 4 weeks apart. You can find more information on ACIP influenza vaccine recommendations at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/summary/summary-recommendations.htm>

Q: Staff have asked about getting the vaccine now versus later in the flu season, with concerns that their immunity might not cover the entire season. We have healthcare workers that received the flu vaccine in June – when should the next dose be given?

A: It is recommended to get the flu vaccine anytime starting now, and ideally before November 1<sup>st</sup>. An influenza vaccine given in June would be the previous year's formulation so the healthcare worker would need to still get a dose of this season's formulation.

Q: Are newly hired employees required to receive a flu vaccination if it is outside of the flu season?

A: Healthcare workers hired in the summer months can wait until the next season's vaccine becomes available, i.e. the following fall.