



HEALTH ADVISORY #132

Influenza Associated School Outbreaks

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and School-Based Health Clinics

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WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health

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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, SCHOOLS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

OTHER RECIPIENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

Influenza activity is currently high in the United States, and West Virginia (WV) is reporting widespread influenza activity. The predominant strain circulating in WV is influenza A (H3N2), but approximately a third of respiratory specimens have tested positive for influenza B this season. Flu activity has been moderate so far, with severity indicators within the range of what has been seen during previous seasons during which influenza A (H3N2) viruses have predominated. Thirty-six (36) influenza outbreaks have been reported since January 2017 with about a third being reported from school settings.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:

- Continue to offer and encourage influenza vaccination to all unvaccinated persons aged ≥ 6 months as long as influenza viruses are circulating. Vaccination can reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes such as hospitalization and death.
- Influenza testing of individual patients may provide clinically useful results that will help with diagnosis and treatment decisions.
- It is important to determine the etiology of respiratory outbreaks in closed settings. Testing for influenza by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is available at the WV Office of Laboratory Services for surveillance and outbreak response and should be coordinated through your local health department. For a list of local health departments, visit <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/localhealth/Pages/Map.aspx>.
- Influenza antiviral medications are an important adjunct to vaccination in the treatment and prevention of influenza. For a summary of clinical practices regarding the use of influenza antiviral medications, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>.
- Encourage children and adults to take every day preventive actions to protect themselves against influenza including using good hand hygiene and staying home from school or work when sick.

Guidelines for the management of outbreaks in schools can be found at:

<http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/ob/Pages/OutbreakToolkits.aspx>.

For more information, contact your local health department or the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) at 1-800-423-1271, ext. 1 or (304)558-5358, ext. 1; or call the Answering Service at (304) 925-9946.

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