



INYO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

A Division of Health & Human Services
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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Down, But Not Out!

Current Status:

2009 H1N1 influenza activity continues to be “regional” in 12 states, including California and Nevada, with only one state now reporting “widespread” activity (Alabama). Most indicators show that illness levels are declining. This means that they are approaching the levels normally seen at this time of year. Remember, we are now entering the season usually associated with peak levels of influenza; therefore, “normal” still means the significant presence of influenza activity in our communities. In the last reporting week ending January 2, California reported 86 hospitalizations and 9 deaths, for a total of 8,308 hospitalizations and 470 deaths since the pandemic began last year.

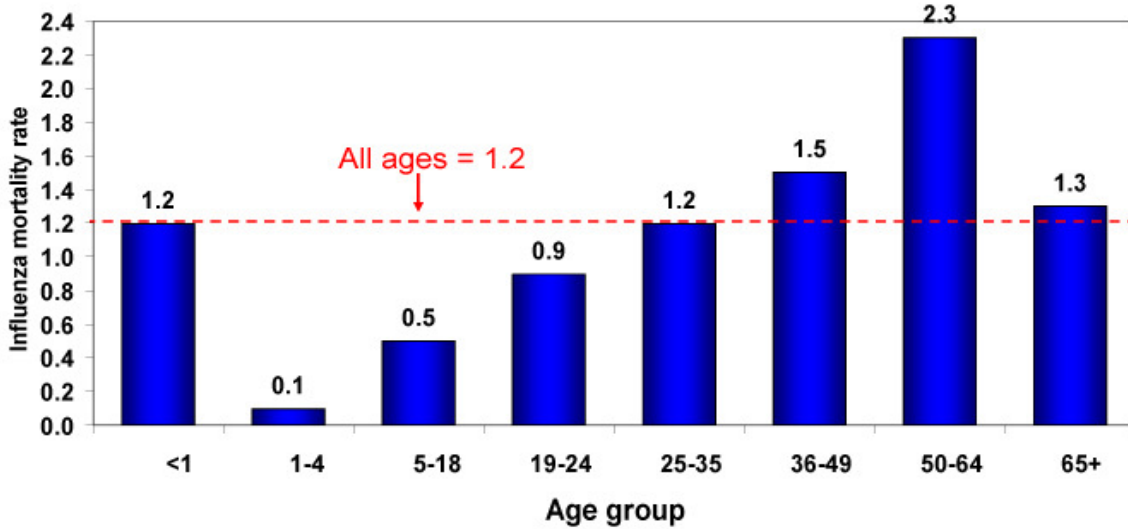
Who has been hit the hardest? Evidence continues to show that infants and pregnant females have been among the hardest hit. There have been 37 pediatric deaths, and 17 deaths in pregnant women in California. In addition, minority populations have suffered large burdens, with over 55% of hospitalized patients in Los Angeles being Hispanic (Los Angeles County is 47% Latino). Many western states have mirrored the experience in Inyo County, where over 50 % of hospitalized patients were American Indian.

Virtually all influenza activity thus far has been the H1N1 strain, which is expected to continue to circulate during the winter and spring of 2010. There have only been scattered reports of “seasonal flu”, caused by influenza B and influenza A H3. This next month will tell us a lot about what kind of a “seasonal flu” season we will have. RSV activity continues to increase as expected for this time of year (see graph on page 3).

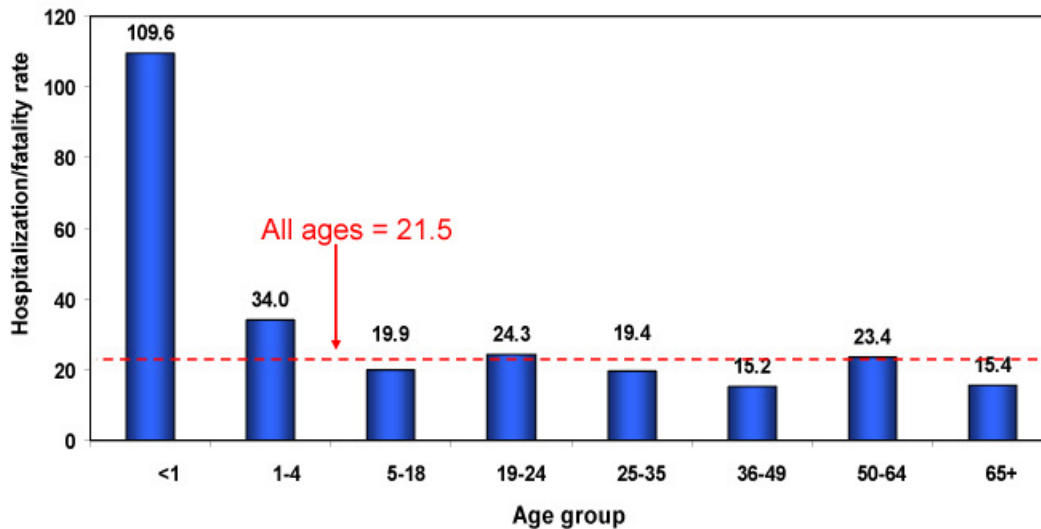
We have not seen any resurgence in illness with the re-opening of school this month. We will be continuing our enhanced active surveillance activities in anticipation of a possible third wave of illness later this spring.

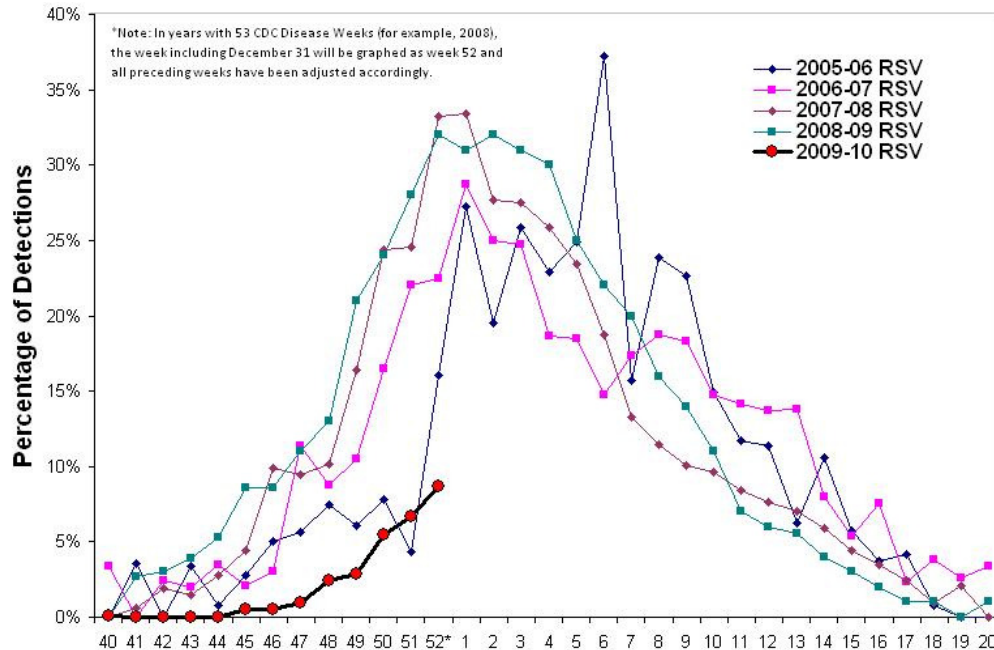


Age-specific mortality rate (per 100,000 population) of 2009 H1N1 influenza in California, reported April 23, 2009 – January 2, 2010



Age specific hospitalization/fatality rate (per 100,000 population) of 2009 H1N1 influenza in California, reported April 23, 2009 – January 2, 2010





Vaccine and You:

This week has been proclaimed National Influenza Vaccination Week. We have rapidly gone from a situation with lots of illness and little vaccine, to one with lots of vaccine and less illness. However, about 50% of the population remains unprotected from a potential third wave. The initial vaccine campaign focused on target groups such as infants and pregnant females. As you can see from the above graphs, other groups also carry significant risk, especially adults aged 50-64 with chronic medical conditions, and minorities. A misconception has developed that those over 65 are not at risk; in fact, they don't get ill as often, but if they do get sick, they don't do as well due to their underlying chronic medical conditions. In addition, American Indian and Hispanic populations carry more than their share of the illness burden.

The H1N1 flu vaccine is safe, effective, and the best way to protect yourself and your family from the H1N1 flu. Extensive testing and monitoring has verified not only its safety, but also that it is an excellent match for the H1N1 flu virus. And remember that when you get vaccinated, you don't just help yourself; you help your community by preventing the spread of the flu virus in homes, schools, workplaces (including health care facilities), churches, stores, and other public places. We especially encourage people with chronic underlying medical conditions, pregnant women, children, young adults, caretakers of infants, and health care workers to get vaccinated against H1N1 as soon as possible.

We in public health will be staying vigilant, but fighting flu is a shared responsibility. We ask you to join us in this fight to protect yourself and your community by getting the H1N1 flu vaccine. Getting the vaccine is much safer than getting the H1N1 influenza. Severe illness and possible death can be associated with influenza, and vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza infection and complications. Call the Health Department at 760-873-7868 for information on where to get vaccinated.