



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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February 18, 2011

Dear Colleague:

This letter is to update you on our influenza season to date in Virginia and to alert you that we have entered what is likely our period of highest activity with influenza-like activity (ILI) and confirmed cases of influenza remaining widespread across Virginia, so please continue your good work in influenza prevention and control efforts.

Continue to offer influenza vaccine to your patients or refer them to vaccine providers in the community. Influenza viruses will continue to circulate even after the ILI activity peaks and starts to decline. This year, CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that all persons over 6 months of age be vaccinated against influenza. There continues to be a good match between the vaccine and circulating viruses.

Influenza vaccine administered late in the influenza season has special benefit for specific groups:

- Newly pregnant women or women who plan to become pregnant will benefit from vaccine protection now and early in the next flu season. In addition, their infants will have a reduced risk of hospitalization for influenza-like illness during their first six months of life.
- Any child aged 6 months through 8 years, who received seasonal influenza vaccine for the first time this year, should get a second dose during this season. Two doses this season means the child will only need one dose next year and subsequent years.
- Travelers to the Southern Hemisphere during our summer months should be vaccinated prior to their departure.

If you use the Virginia Immunization Information System (VIIS), continue to enter influenza vaccine doses into VIIS. If your practice is not using VIIS or not transferring your immunization data to VIIS, please consider signing up for VIIS.

You will find more detailed information on current influenza activity, influenza vaccine coverage and VIIS on the following pages. I appreciate your efforts and encourage your continued vigilance in caring for your patients with influenza and providing influenza vaccinations to your patients.

Sincerely,

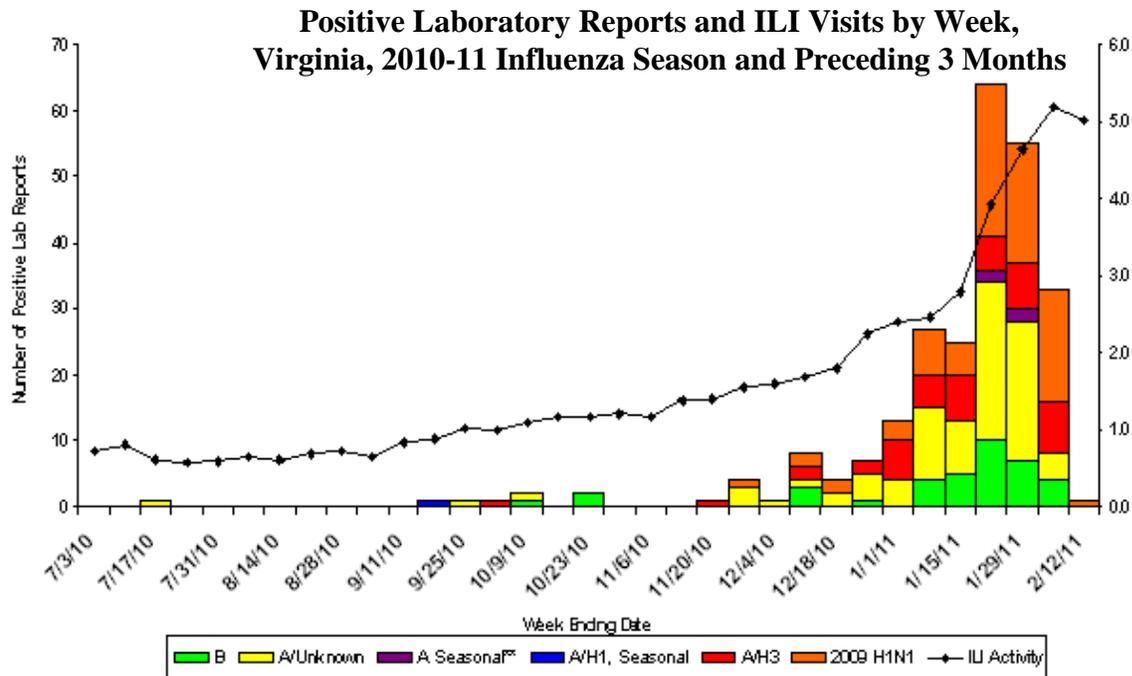
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Karen Remley".

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP

Influenza-like Illness and Influenza Activity in Virginia

During the week of February 7, 2011 to February 12, 2011, 5.0% of visits to our emergency departments and urgent care centers were for influenza-like illness (ILI). Current patterns of illness are similar to the rest of the United States and similar to those seen during the 2008-2009 and other “normal” influenza seasons in the past.

The 2009 influenza A (H1N1), influenza A (H3N2), and influenza B viruses all have circulated in Virginia during this influenza season. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has received reports of approximately 250 influenza viruses for which a type or subtype has been confirmed. Of these, approximately 33% are 2009 A (H1), 18% are A (H3), 34% are A (not subtyped), and 15% are influenza B viruses. The proportion due to 2009 A (H1N1) has increased as the season has progressed.

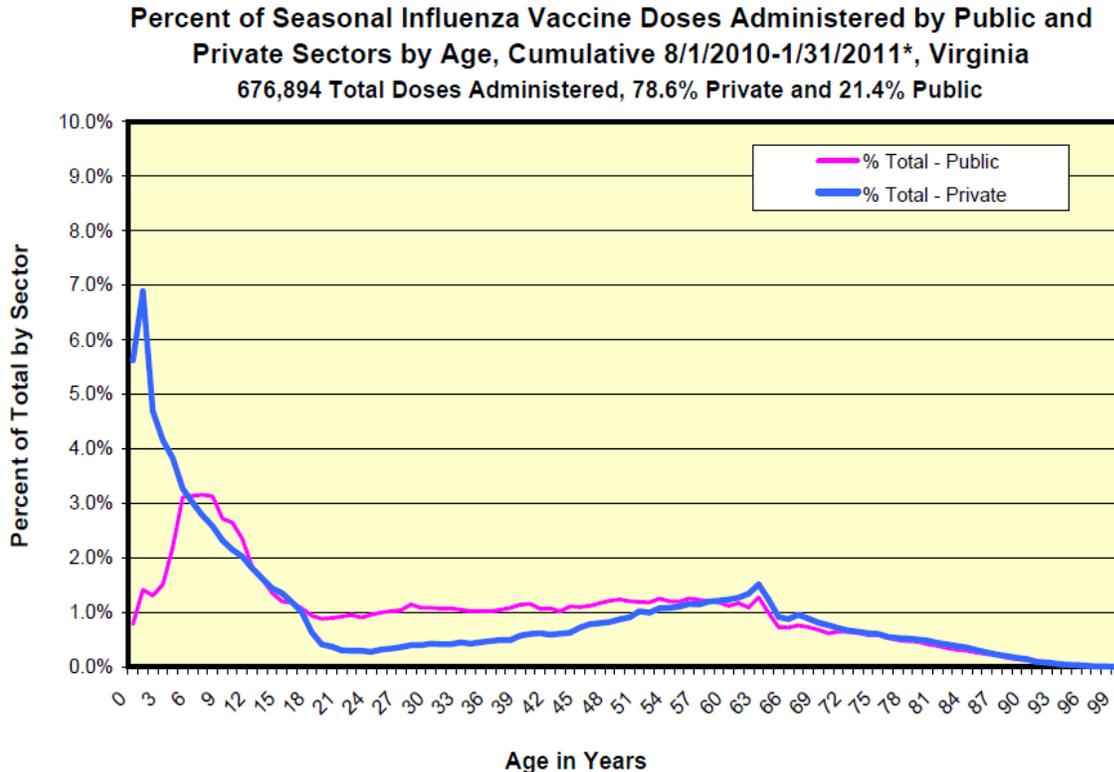


Influenza-associated deaths in children <18 years of age are reportable in Virginia. Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported so far this season—two associated with 2009 influenza A (H1N1) and one with an influenza B virus.

Weekly updates on influenza activity in Virginia and the United States are available at:
 VDH: www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/Surveillance/Influenza/WklyPhysReport.pdf and
 CDC: www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm

Influenza Vaccine Coverage and the Virginia Immunization Information System (VIIS)

As of January 31, 2011, 676,894 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine have been reported as administered by 353 private providers and 35 health districts using the VIIS. Of the 676,894 reported doses, 78.6% were administered by the private sector and 21.4% by the public sector (local health departments). Information from VIIS reveals the private sector has provided a greater number of doses to the very young and also to older age groups while the public sector has focused on school-aged children and young-to-middle-aged adults.



*Note: Data for Fairfax Health District is through 12/31/2010. Data sources include WebVISION and VIIS.

VDH truly appreciates the efforts of those providers who are using VIIS to report their vaccine doses administered. Participation of all providers in VIIS is critical to being able to accurately evaluate our prevention interventions against influenza; comprehensively assess immunization coverage rates for all vaccines administered; identify under-immunized areas of the state; and target our resources to the areas of greatest need. It also allows for providers to track their own successes in their population of patients.

For more information on enrolling in VIIS, please contact the VDH Division of Immunization at (804) 864-8055 and ask to speak to a VIIS consultant. If you are interested in learning more about how VIIS can assist you with demonstrating Meaningful Use of your Electronic Health Record (EHR) and becoming eligible for federal incentives available under the Affordable Care Act, please contact Greg Dennis at gregory.dennis@vdh.virginia.gov.