



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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ACTING STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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January 7, 2013

Dear Colleague,

Happy New Year. On January 21, 2013, the 57th Presidential Inauguration will be held in Washington, DC. This event has historically drawn large crowds into the Washington, DC metro area to take part in the ceremony and associated activities. While the formal Inauguration occurs within Washington, DC, many activities will occur in Virginia and Maryland; as well, many of the visitors will be coming from and returning to all parts of the Commonwealth. Although we have no information to identify a specific threat or concern, the Virginia Department of Health, as well as the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, will be supporting the District of Columbia Department of Health in monitoring the public's health during and around this event through enhanced public health surveillance.

All three agencies will be utilizing chief complaint data from hospital emergency departments and from urgent care centers within the three states to identify emerging health issues before, during, and after the event. While this enhanced surveillance effort provides an excellent picture of persons seeking acute medical care, it does not replace the efforts of astute clinicians who identify unusual clusters of illness through their interaction with patients.

There are three specific actions we ask you to consider this month:

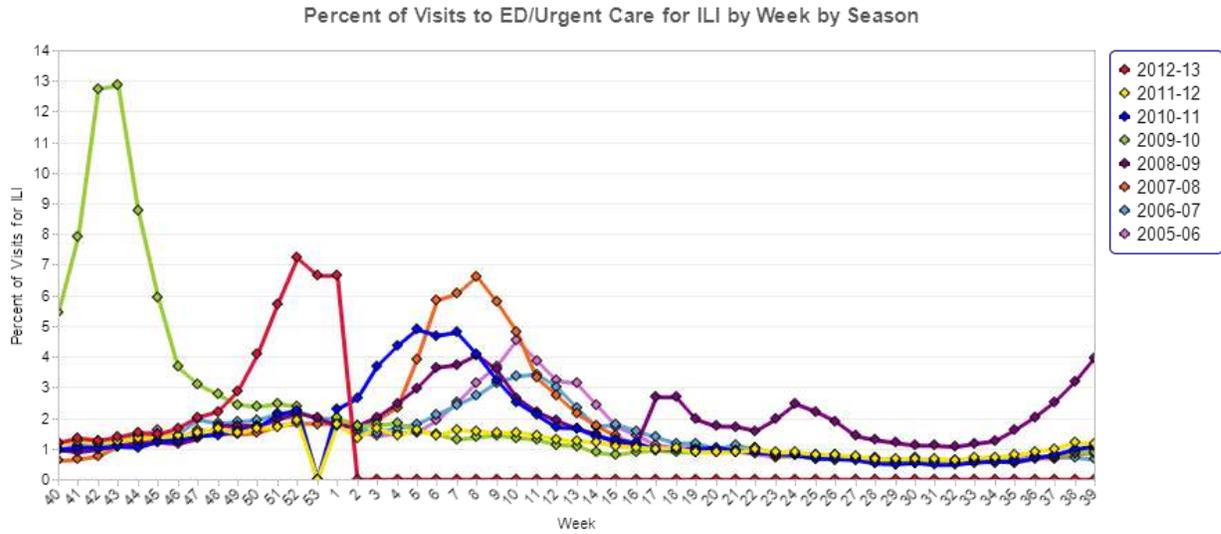
- 1. Take a travel history from your patients – including attendance at an Inauguration event.**
- 2. Be sure to report any and all suspected or diagnosed reportable conditions.**
- 3. Continue to promote flu vaccination and other disease prevention actions by your patients and staff.**

Regardless of where you are located in Virginia, if you observe an increase in the number of patients presenting with an illness between January 17th and the end of the month, please consider asking if they have attended an Inauguration event. Should you have any concerns or suspicions of unusual presentations or trends in illness, please do not hesitate to contact your local health department at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm>.

As always, please be sure to alert your health department of any reportable conditions you diagnose. You can find a list of the Virginia's reportable conditions [online](#). Your prompt action can mean the difference between disease control and an outbreak.

Identifying potential event-related illnesses may be challenging because, as you are aware, both influenza and norovirus activity have increased markedly in Virginia in recent weeks. The proportion of visits to an

emergency department or urgent care center for influenza-like illness is at a level that is greater, and earlier, than all recent seasons except for the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.



Please remind your patients who have not yet received their annual influenza vaccine that it is not too late to do so. Thank you for your continued partnership in protecting the public health of Virginians.

Sincerely,

Maureen E. Dempsey, MD, FAAP
Acting State Health Commissioner