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Alaska lab reports increase in confirmed flu cases

Both seasonal flu and H1N1 on the rise in Alaska

ANCHORAGE — After months of relative quiet, the Alaska State Virology Laboratory is now reporting an increase in the number of positive flu specimens submitted.

Between Nov. 28, 2010, and Dec. 31, 2010, the lab had confirmed only six cases of influenza: four type A and two type B. However, in just the past three weeks the lab has reported 44 cases of influenza A (26 H3 seasonal flu and 18 H1N1) and seven cases of influenza B (another seasonal flu strain).

“The flu is definitely here,” Dr. Beth Funk, state epidemiologist, said. “This is developing as a much more typical flu year than last year. We’ve still got months of the flu season ahead of us, so if you haven’t been immunized against the flu, this would be a good week to get it done.”

Full immunity is not developed until approximately two weeks following immunization.

“The good news is, all three flu strains we see circulating this year are in the vaccine,” Funk said. “For most folks, a single dose is all you’ll need for this flu season.”

State health officials encourage everyone who can to get the flu vaccine, if not just to protect themselves, then to protect those around them.

“Our campaign says — your flu vaccine protects me, my flu vaccine protects you,” Funk said. “That’s good advice.”

Nov. 25, 2010 - Jan. 22, 2011

| | Anch/Mat-Su | Gulf Coast | Interior | Northern | Southeast | Southwest |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Influenza A H3 (seasonal strain) | 20 | | | | 5 | 1 |
| Influenza A H1N1 (pandemic strain) | 12 | 3 | 1 | | | 2 |
| Influenza B | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 |

A map that describes the 6 regions below can be found at <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/census/EconRegions2.pdf>

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