

William J. Streur
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 20, 2012

Contact: Laura Carpenter, 907-269-4541, Cell 907-632-7682, laura.carpenter@alaska.gov
Greg Wilkinson, 907-269-7285, Cell 907-382-7032, gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov

Reported flu and pertussis cases increase in Alaska

Anchorage and Interior see largest growth of confirmed influenza during recent weeks

ANCHORAGE — Influenza activity in Alaska has increased in recent weeks and has been confirmed in most regions of the state, according to the Alaska State Virology Laboratory. Pertussis (whooping cough) cases are also still on the rise.

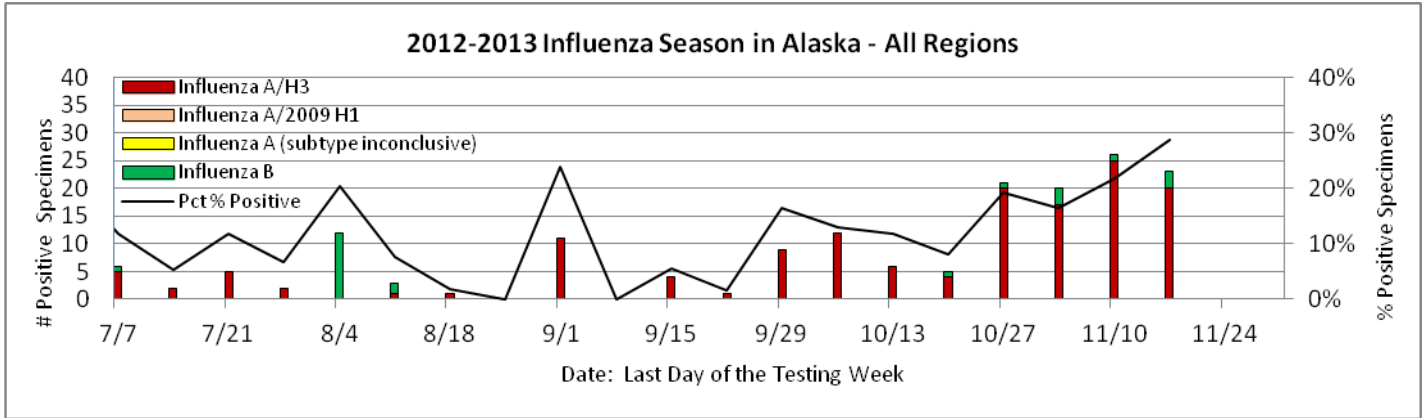
“The flu is here,” said Dr. Joe McLaughlin, chief epidemiologist for the state of Alaska. After minimal activity during the summer and fall, the State Virology Laboratory has confirmed 91 cases of influenza in the last four weeks, including 23 cases from Nov. 10 to 17. The majority of recent positive test results came from the Anchorage/Mat-Su and Interior regions.

The Department of Health and Social Services expects continuing increases in influenza activity as the influenza season progresses. “During the holidays we see an uptick in respiratory illnesses, especially influenza,” McLaughlin added. “People congregate, and viruses spread.”

People who have not already been vaccinated this season should do so now. Influenza vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and those you love from the flu. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine each year. Other preventative measures include washing your hands, covering coughs with your sleeve or tissue, staying home when sick and practicing good general hygiene.

Getting vaccinated is also the best way to protect yourself and others from another serious respiratory illness — pertussis or “whooping cough.” From 2009 to 2011, the annual average number of pertussis cases reported in Alaska was 42. Already this year, more than 200 cases have been reported in the state. Children should receive a total of five DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) vaccines between the ages of 2 months and 4–6 years. All adolescents starting at age 11 years and adults should get a one-time booster of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine.

For more information on flu in Alaska, visit flu.alaska.gov. For more information on pertussis, visit <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/pertussis/pertussis.htm>.



###

The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services promotes and protects the health and well-being of Alaskans. We help individuals and families create safe and healthy communities. For more information, visit <http://hss.alaska.gov/>.