

INFLUENZA-ASSOCIATED PEDIATRIC MORTALITY

- Agent Information:** Influenza (“the flu”) is a respiratory illness caused by an influenza virus. Influenza viruses are orthomyxoviruses of either A, B or C type. (Type C is very rare compared to type A and type B). Annual epidemics are caused by influenza virus types A and B, and both influenza A and B virus antigens are included in seasonal influenza vaccines. Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness that occurs worldwide and can cause mild to severe illness. Nationwide, each year between 7,000 and 26,000 children under the age of five years are hospitalized because of influenza complications.
- Clinical Case Definition:** An influenza-associated death is defined for surveillance purposes as a death resulting from a clinically compatible illness that was confirmed to be influenza by an appropriate laboratory or rapid diagnostic test. There should be no period of complete recovery between the illness and death.
- Transmission:** Influenza viruses are spread from person to person by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks in close proximity to an uninfected person. Sometimes, influenza viruses are spread when a person touches a surface with influenza viruses on it (e.g., a doorknob), and then touches his or her own nose or mouth.
- Signs and Symptoms:** Influenza is a respiratory illness characterized by fever, headache, myalgia, cold, sore throat, and cough. Influenza-like illness (ILI) is defined as a fever of 100 degrees F or greater, accompanied by cough or sore throat. Gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) may be reported in children.

- Protective Measures:** The best way to prevent influenza is to get an influenza vaccine each year as soon as the vaccine is available to the public. Vaccination is associated with reduced influenza-related respiratory illnesses, physician visits, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- Treatment:** Antivirals may be effective at treating influenza, especially if given within 48 to 72 hours of onset. Antiviral treatment should not be delayed pending laboratory testing. Control of fever with acetaminophen or other appropriate antipyretic agents may be important especially in young children.
- Reporting:** Report cases immediately to the Delaware Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch: 1-888-295-5156 (24/7 coverage).
- For more information:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/children.htm>