

FLU EXPRESS



Flu Express is a weekly report produced by the Respiratory Disease Office of the Centre for Health Protection. It monitors and summarizes the latest local and global influenza activities.

Local Situation of Influenza Activity (as of Dec 5, 2018)

Reporting period: November 25 – December 1, 2018 (Week 48)

- The latest surveillance data showed that the overall influenza activity in Hong Kong has increased slightly, but is still below the baseline threshold currently. It is expected that the winter influenza season will arrive soon.
- Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that seasonal influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications are recommended to receive influenza vaccine to protect themselves against seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as related hospitalisations and deaths.
- In the coming 2018/19 season, the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) has been expanded to cover those aged 50 to 64 to receive subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination. It also continues to provide subsidised vaccination to children aged 6 months to under 12 years, elderly aged 65 years or above, pregnant women, persons with intellectual disabilities and recipients of Disability Allowance. Under the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP), eligible groups for free vaccination are the same as that of 2017/18. VSS and GVP have been launched on Oct 10 and Oct 24, 2018 respectively. For more details, please refer to the webpage (http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/17980.html).

Influenza-like-illness surveillance among sentinel general outpatient clinics and sentinel private doctors, 2014-18

In week 48, the average consultation rate for influenza-like illness (ILI) among sentinel general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) was 4.1 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was lower than 4.8 recorded in the previous week (Figure 1, left). The average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel private doctors was 29.5 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was lower than 29.7 recorded in the previous week (Figure 1, right).

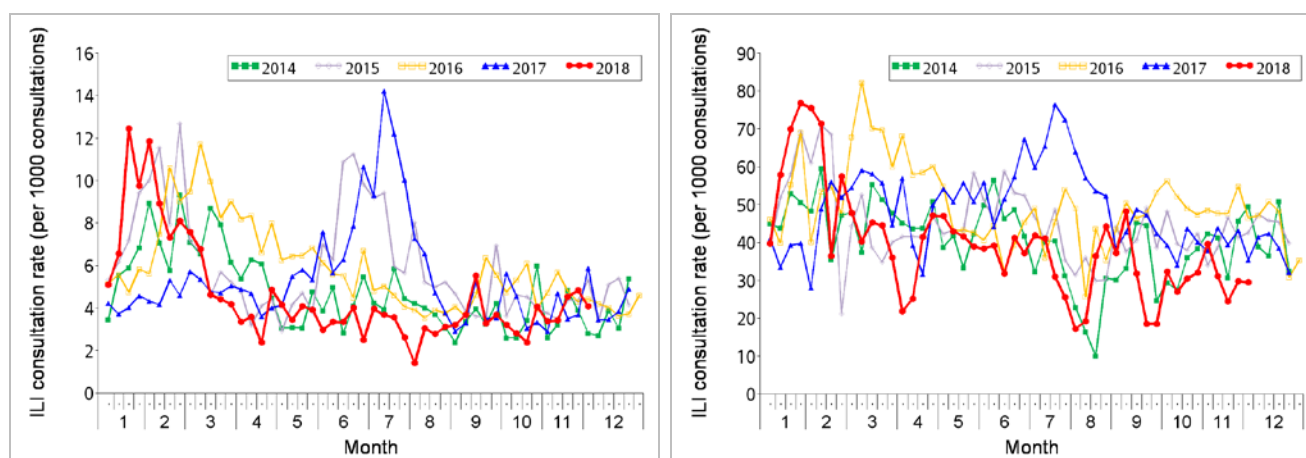


Figure 1 ILI consultation rate at sentinel GOPCs (left) and private doctors (right), 2014-18

Laboratory surveillance, 2014-18

Among the respiratory specimens received in week 48, the positive percentage of seasonal influenza viruses was 5.10%, which was below the baseline threshold of 10.7% but was higher than 4.38% recorded in the previous week (Figure 2). The 234 influenza viruses detected last week included 173 (3.77%) influenza A(H1), 47 (1.03%) influenza A(H3), 6 (0.13%) influenza B and 8 (0.17%) influenza C.

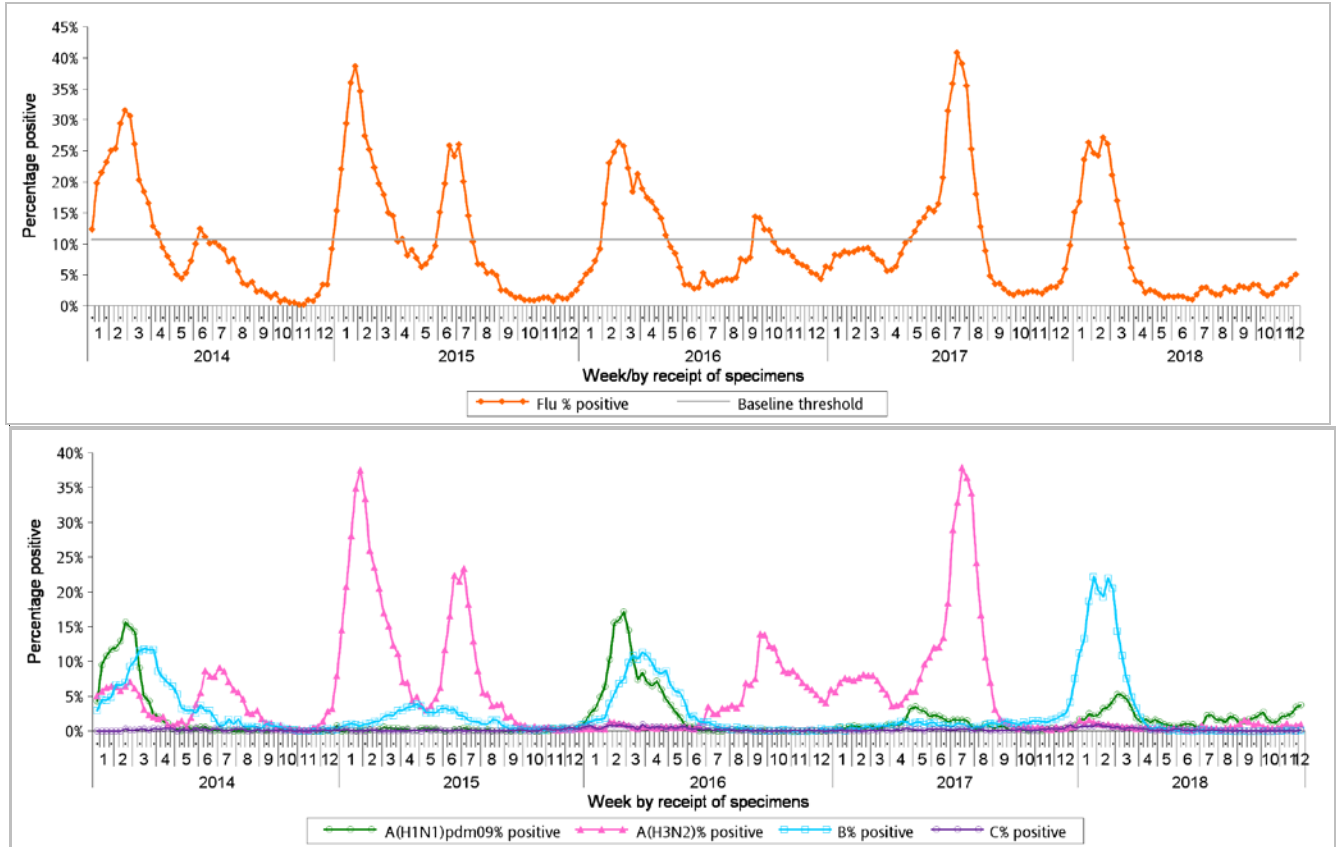


Figure 2 Percentage of respiratory specimens tested positive for influenza viruses, 2014-18 (upper: overall positive percentage, lower: positive percentage by subtypes)

[Note: The baseline threshold is 1.96 standard deviation above the average weekly positive percentage during non-season periods from 2014-2017.]

Influenza-like illness outbreak surveillance, 2014-18

In week 48, 18 ILI outbreaks occurring in schools/ institutions were recorded (affecting 125 persons), as compared to six outbreaks recorded in the previous week (affecting 59 persons) (Figure 3). In the first 4 days of week 49 (Dec 2 to 5), 13 ILI outbreaks in schools/ institutions were recorded (affecting 82 persons).

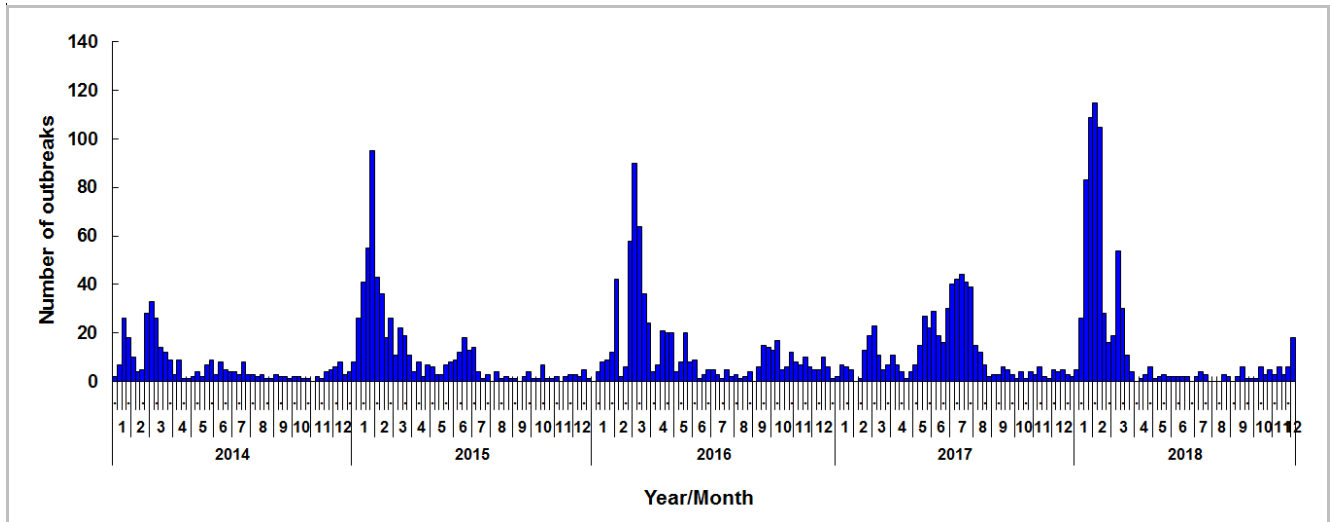


Figure 3 ILI outbreaks in schools/institutions, 2014-18

Type of institutions	Week 47	Week 48	First 4 days of week 49 (Dec 2 to 5)
Kindergarten/ child care centre	3	7	9
Primary school	3	7	3
Secondary school	0	2	0
Residential care home for the elderly	0	1	0
Residential care home for persons with disabilities	0	0	1
Others	0	1	0
<i>Total number of outbreaks</i>	6	18	13
<i>Total number of persons affected</i>	59	125	82

Influenza-associated hospital admission rates in public hospitals based on discharge coding, 2014-18

In week 48, the overall admission rates in public hospitals with principal diagnosis of influenza was 0.16 (per 10,000 population), which was below the baseline threshold of 0.20 but was higher than 0.13 recorded in the previous week. The influenza-associated admission rates for persons aged 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-64 years and 65 years or above were 1.55, 0.59, 0.06 and 0.21 cases (per 10,000 people in the age group) respectively, as compared to 0.97, 0.59, 0.05 and 0.22 cases in the previous week (Figure 4).

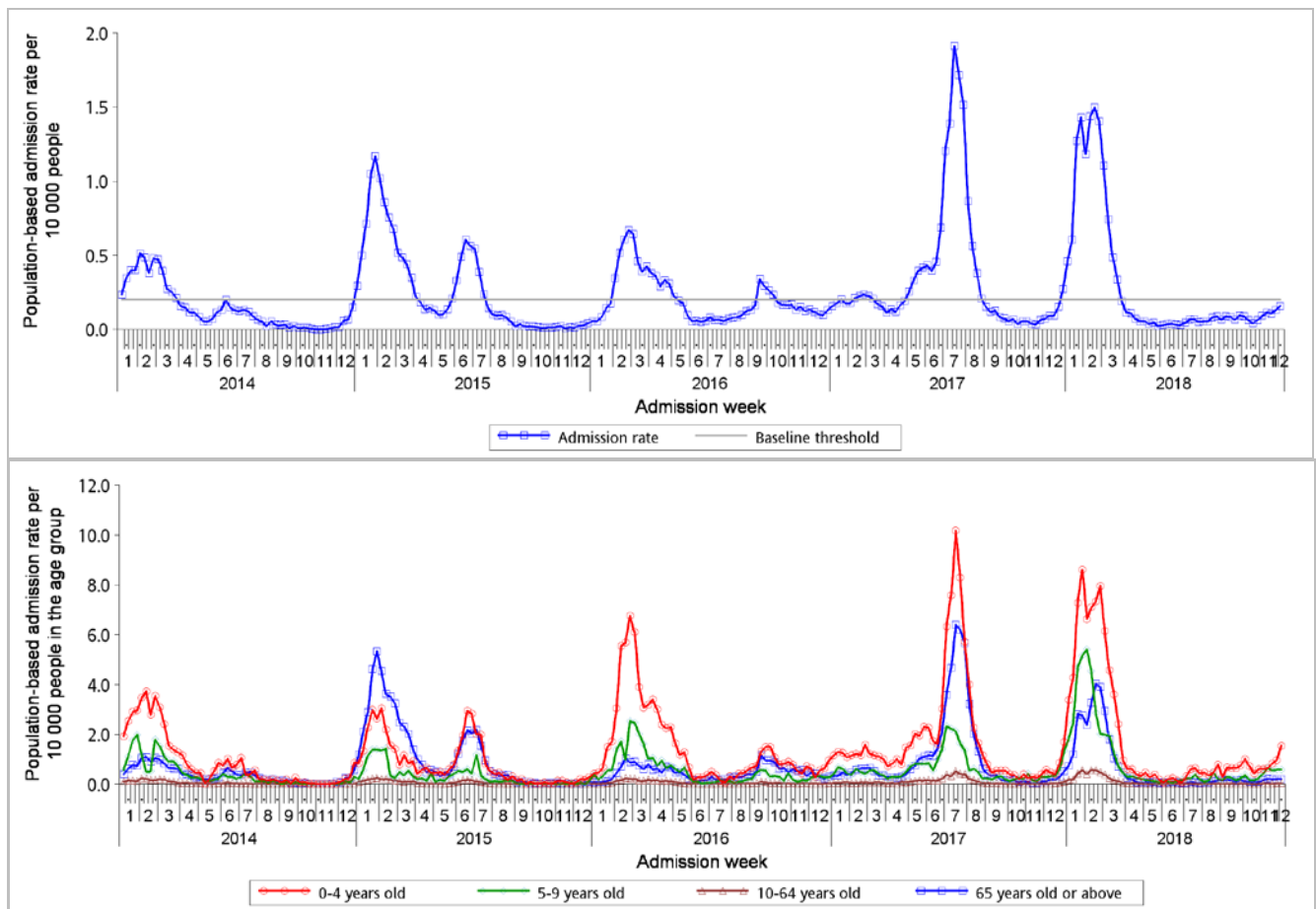


Figure 4 Influenza-associated hospital admission rates, 2014-18 (upper: overall rate, lower: rates by age groups)

[Note: The baseline threshold is 1.96 standard deviation above the average weekly admission rate during non-season periods from 2014-2017.]

Rate of ILI syndrome group in accident and emergency departments, 2014-18[#]

In week 48, the rate of the ILI syndrome group in the accident and emergency departments (AEDs) was 155.0 (per 1,000 coded cases), which was higher than the rate of 143.8 in the previous week (Figure 5).

#Note: This syndrome group includes codes related to ILI such as influenza, upper respiratory tract infection, fever, cough, throat pain, and pneumonia.

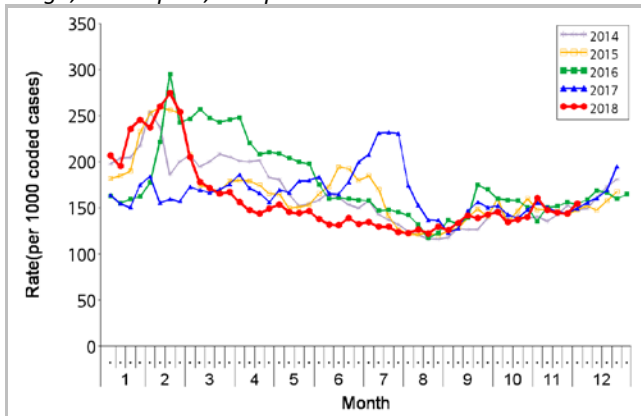


Figure 5 Rate of ILI syndrome group in AEDs, 2014-18

Fever surveillance at sentinel child care centres/ kindergartens, 2014-18

In week 48, 0.83% of children in the sentinel child care centres / kindergartens (CCCs/KGs) had fever (38°C or above) as compared to 0.82% recorded in the previous week (Figure 6).

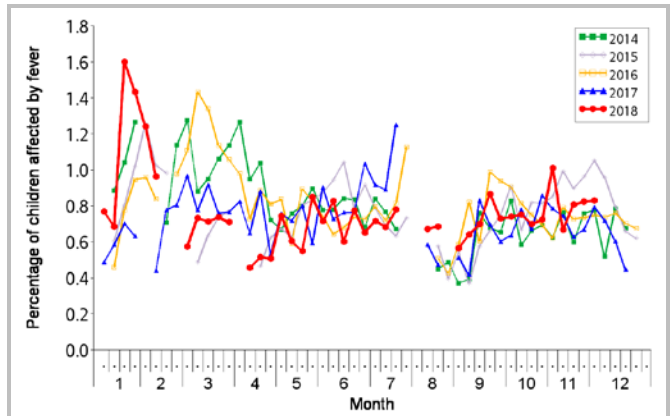


Figure 6 Percentage of children with fever at sentinel CCCs/KGs, 2014-18

Fever surveillance at sentinel residential care homes for the elderly, 2014-18

In week 48, 0.07% of residents in the sentinel residential care homes for the elderly (RCHes) had fever (38°C or above), compared to 0.09% recorded in the previous week (Figure 7).

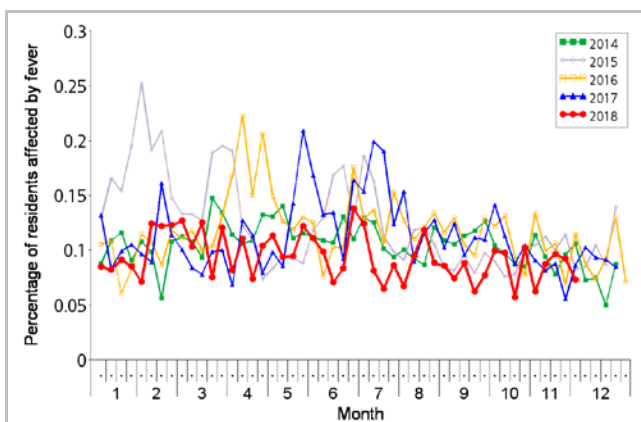


Figure 7 Percentage of residents with fever at sentinel RCHes, 2014-18

Influenza-like illness surveillance among sentinel Chinese medicine practitioners, 2014-18

In week 48, the average consultation rate for ILI among Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) was 1.87 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations as compared to 1.98 recorded in the previous week (Figure 8).

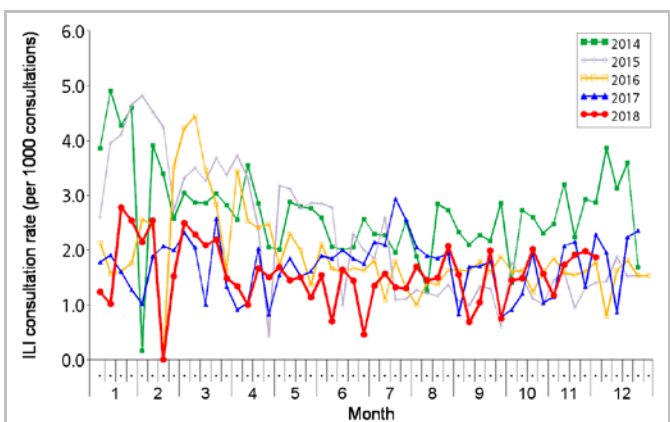


Figure 8 ILI consultation rate at sentinel CMPs, 2014-18

Surveillance of severe influenza cases

(Note: The data reported are provisional figures and subject to further revision.)

Surveillance for intensive care unit (ICU) admissions/deaths with laboratory confirmation of influenza among adult patients (Aged 18 years or above)

For surveillance purpose, the cases refer to laboratory-confirmed influenza patients who required ICU admission or died within the same admission of influenza infection. Their causes of ICU admission or death may be due to other acute medical conditions or underlying diseases.

- In week 48, five adult cases of ICU admission/deaths with laboratory confirmation of influenza were recorded (including three deaths) as compared to six cases (including four deaths) recorded in the previous week. None of the five severe adult cases were known to have received the 2018/19 influenza vaccine.

Week	Influenza type				
	A(H1)	A(H3)	B	C	A (pending subtype)
Week 47	3	2	0	0	1
Week 48	3	1	0	0	1

Surveillance of severe paediatric influenza-associated complication/death (Aged below 18 years)

- In week 48 and the first 4 days of week 49 (Dec 2 to 5), there were two cases of severe paediatric influenza-associated complications. The case details are as follow:

Reporting week	Age	Sex	Complication	Fatal case?	Influenza subtype	History of receiving influenza vaccine for this season
49	17 years	Female	Shock	No	Influenza B	Yes
49	10 years	Male	Encephalopathy	No	Influenza A	No

Data as of Dec 5, 2018

- In 2018, 29 paediatric cases of influenza-associated complication/death were recorded, in which three of them were fatal (as of Dec 5). 23 (79%) did not receive the seasonal influenza vaccine.

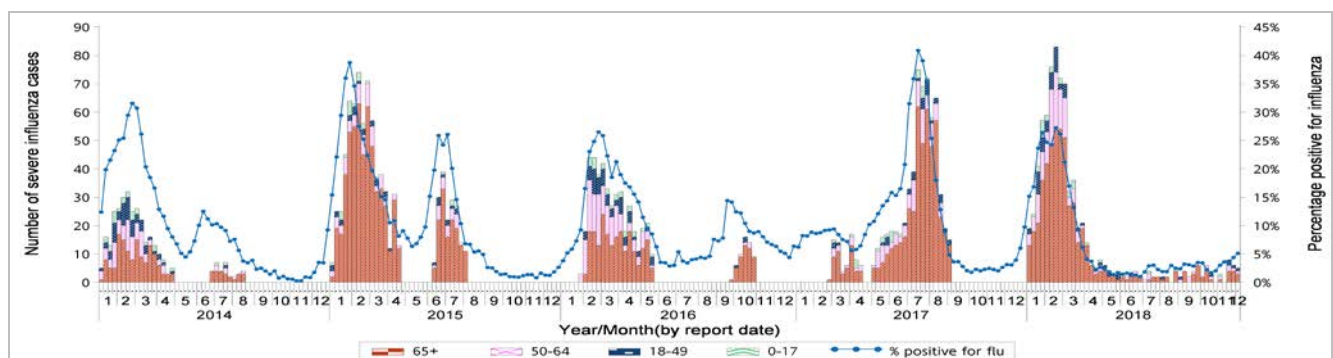


Figure 9 Weekly number of severe influenza cases by age groups, 2014-18 (the percentage positive for influenza viruses in Figure 2 is also shown in this graph)

Note: The surveillance system for severe influenza cases among adult patients aged 18 years or above was only activated intermittently during influenza seasons before 2018.

Surveillance of oseltamivir resistant influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus infection

- In week 48 and the first 4 days of week 49 (Dec 2 to 5), there were no new reports of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) resistant influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus infection. There are totally 48 reports of oseltamivir resistant influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus detected in Hong Kong since 2009.

Global Situation of Influenza Activity

Influenza activity started to increase in temperate zone of the northern hemisphere although overall influenza activity remained low. Increased influenza detections were reported in some countries of South-East Asia and Central America. In the temperate zones of southern hemisphere, influenza activity returned to nearly inter-seasonal levels. Worldwide, seasonal influenza subtype A viruses accounted for the majority of detections.

- In the United States (week ending Nov 24, 2018), influenza activity increased slightly. The proportion of outpatient visits for ILI increased to 2.3%, which was above the national baseline of 2.2%. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, influenza A(H3N2), and influenza B viruses continued to co-circulate, with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses reported most commonly since September 30, 2018.
- In Canada (week ending Nov 24, 2018), influenza activity continued to increase. The influenza season has started earlier than in recent years. Influenza A was the most common influenza virus, and the majority of these viruses were A(H1N1)pdm09.
- In the United Kingdom (week ending Nov 25, 2018), influenza activity has started to increase, with sporadic cases of influenza detected in the community though all indicators remain below baseline threshold levels. The positivity of influenza detection was 3.5% in the week ending November 25, 2018, which was below the baseline threshold of 9.2%.
- In Europe (week ending Nov 25, 2018), influenza activity was low throughout the Region. Influenza viruses were detected sporadically in specimens from persons with respiratory illness presenting to medical care. The large majority of influenza virus detections were of type A.
- In Mainland China (week ending Nov 18, 2018), influenza activity remained low but overall was on an increasing trend. Influenza viruses detected were mainly influenza A(H1N1).
- In Taiwan area (week ending Dec 1, 2018), influenza activity remained low and was at inter-seasonal level. Influenza A(H3N2) viruses predominated (74%) in community in recent four weeks.
- In Macau (week ending Nov 24, 2018), the proportion of ILI cases in emergency departments among adults remained low and that among children increased as compared to the previous week. The proportion of influenza detections decreased as compared to the previous week. Influenza viruses detected were all influenza A(H1).
- In Japan (week ending Nov 25, 2018), the average number of reported ILI cases per sentinel site was 0.52 in the week ending November 25, 2018, which was below the baseline level of 1.00. The predominating virus in the past four weeks was influenza A(H1N1)pdm09.

Sources:

Information have been extracted from the following sources when updates are available: [World Health Organization](#), [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [Public Health Agency of Canada](#), [Public Health England](#), [Joint European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control-World Health Organization/Flu News Europe](#), [Chinese National Influenza Center](#), [Taiwan Centers for Disease Control](#), [Health Bureau of Macao Special Administrative Region](#) and [Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare](#).