



Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
286 Water Street  
11 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel: (207) 287-8016; Fax (207) 287-9058  
TTY Users: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

---

## Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

### PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

---

**To:** All Health Care  
**From:** Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist  
**Subject:** Influenza Arrives in Maine  
**Date / Time:** Monday, February 1, 2021 at 11:40AM  
**Pages:** 2  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Message ID:** 2021PHADV002

---

### INFLUENZA ARRIVES IN MAINE

Maine CDC's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) recently confirmed the first case of influenza B by PCR in Maine this season. Although multiple Maine health care facilities have reported influenza-positive antigen results in recent weeks, this is the first PCR-confirmed case. The individual is an adult who was not hospitalized, was unvaccinated, and had no recent travel history.

It is not too late to vaccinate patients against influenza. Influenza vaccination can flatten the curve of influenza illnesses, and it also can help save medical resources for care of patients with COVID-19. Though influenza activity is currently lower than usual for this time of year, it may increase in the coming months. The 2020-2021 quadrivalent influenza vaccine contains components of both A subtypes (H1 and H3) as well as two B lineages (Yamagata and Victoria).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Diagnosis of influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic:** Because some of the symptoms of influenza and COVID-19 are similar, it may be difficult to differentiate them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Clinicians should consider influenza in the differential diagnosis of febrile respiratory illnesses in patients of any age, especially in individuals who have a negative COVID-19 test. Clinicians should encourage their patients to be immunized against influenza if they have not already done so and should review updated recommendations of the use of antiviral medications for influenza prophylaxis and treatment.

**Treatment and Prophylaxis:** Oseltamivir, zanamivir, peramivir, and baloxavir marboxil are drugs currently recommended for treatment and oseltamivir and zanamivir are recommended for prophylaxis. Providers will be notified through the health alert network if national recommendations for treatment and prophylaxis are revised.

**Laboratory:** Influenza and COVID-19 are caused by different viruses requiring different tests. Diagnostic labs and willing facilities should forward the first ten positive influenza test specimens to HETL for confirmatory PCR and subtyping. Influenza testing through HETL is always free of charge. Instructions on submitting specimens for flu testing can be found at: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/submitting-samples.shtml>.

**Reporting:** Infection preventionists, laboratories, clinicians, school nurses, and other reporting entities **must** report:

- Laboratory-confirmed influenza hospitalizations,
- Pediatric influenza deaths, and
- Suspected outbreaks of influenza

to Maine CDC by phone at 1-800-821-5821 or by fax at 1-800-293-7534. Maine CDC appreciates all reports of positive influenza tests by any testing method either by electronic laboratory reporting, phone (1-800-821-5821), or fax (1-800-293-7534).

**Vaccination:** The best way to prevent influenza is by getting vaccinated. Maine CDC and national authorities recommend all individuals older than 6 months be immunized, even if they were vaccinated for influenza last season. Influenza vaccine is available in Maine.

**Prevention:** As we enter the influenza season, it is important to remember the “No Flu 4 You” guidelines to help prevent illness: Wash your hands; cover your cough; stay home when you’re sick; and get vaccinated.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Information and recommendations on influenza for health professionals: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals>
- Information on the differences between Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>
- Influenza surveillance information in Maine: [www.maineinfluenza.gov](http://www.maineinfluenza.gov)