

Seqirus Media Monitoring

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Seqirus mentions

How the flu vaccine is made

For the 2019-2020 flu season, the majority of vaccines will be made from eggs, likely in one of the two prominent US flu-vaccine manufacturers: Sanofi Pasteur, which has a manufacturing plant in Swiftwater, Pennsylvania, and Seqirus, with a plant in Holly Springs, North Carolina. However, the healthcare community is slowly, but surely, pushing for vaccines that are egg-free, latex-free, and mercury-free. That's why cell cultures and another method, called recombinant, have become more popular in recent years as an alternative way to make flu vaccines for people with egg allergies

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/how-the-flu-vaccine-is-made/ar-BBX8OTQ>

Industry News

Quebec pharmacies facing acute shortage of flu vaccines this year

Pharmacies across Quebec are struggling with an acute shortage of the influenza vaccine even as the flu season is shaping up to be a tougher one. Priority has been given to nursing homes and CLSC clinics that administer the vaccine to so-called vulnerable patients, including those with weakened immune systems. As a result, many commercial pharmacies and employers have run out of their supplies or never even received the vaccines in the first place. ID Biomedical Corporation of Quebec, a subsidiary of GSK, has acknowledged difficulties in producing enough of the quadrivalent influenza vaccine, which is being used for the first time this year to guard against four flu strains rather than the usual three.

<https://montrealgazette.com/health/quebec-pharmacies-facing-acute-shortage-of-flu-vaccines-this-year>

Government accused of 'scare tactics' to deter swine flu vaccine cases

In Ireland, a 26-year-old woman and her mother have criticised government "spin" after a confidential settlement in the first High Court case involving people who claim to suffer narcolepsy arising from a swine flu vaccine. The state agreed a settlement with Aoife Bennett without admitting liability on the effects of administering the Pandemrix vaccine. The trial took 22 days, and a large legal bill was incurred by 25 lawyers in the case. A report in the Irish Times said the likely settlement was around the maximum of €200,000, plus inflation. The article said the case was a "victory" for the state because there was no admission of liability, and speculated that further cases from the 100-strong cohort suing over the vaccine were "most unlikely". A report in the same newspaper quoted "senior government figures" expressing "huge relief about the case" and saying the settlement was "considerably" lower than "feared". Aoife's mother said that she was "very disappointed" with the "political spin", which she described as "scare tactics".

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/government-accused-of-scare-tactics-to-deter-swine-flu-vaccine-cases-952fcbvd5>

Case settled of Irish student who developed narcolepsy after swine flu vaccine

A legal claim against vaccine maker GlaxoSmithKline and the Irish state by a student who developed severe narcolepsy after being vaccinated against swine flu has been settled by mediation after 21 days in the Irish High Court. Aoife Bennett's claim was settled for an undisclosed sum without admission of liability by either the state or GSK after running up costs of millions of euros. The Irish state, which like other countries gave GSK indemnity against legal action over the vaccine's side effects, will pay the full compensation

<https://www.bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l6658>

France - Is the flu vaccine (really) safe?

In France, according to a pharmacists federation, around 1 million people had already received their flu shot in a pharmacy by 19th November. The flu vaccines used this year, Influvac, Fluarixtetra, Vaxigrip tetra, Influvac Tetra, are all inactivated, and none contain aluminium nor thimerosal. They do contain egg protein, as well as negligible traces of formaldehyde and octoxynol, to avoid infections

<https://www.topsante.com/medecine/troubles-ori/grippe/le-vaccin-contre-la-grippe-est-il-vraiment-sur-633870>

Pandemic Influenza News

Disentangling the role of Africa in the global spread of H5 highly pathogenic avian influenza

The role of Africa in the dynamics of the global spread of a zoonotic and economically-important virus, such as the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5Nx of the Gs/GD lineage, remains unexplored. Here researchers characterise the spatiotemporal patterns of virus diffusion during three HPAI H5Nx intercontinental epidemic waves and demonstrate that Africa mainly acted as an ecological sink of the HPAI H5Nx viruses. A joint analysis of host dynamics and continuous spatial diffusion indicates that poultry trade as well as wild bird migrations have contributed to the virus spreading into Africa, with West Africa acting as a crucial hotspot for virus introduction and dissemination into the continent.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-019-13287-y>

Academic studies

Flu Shot Doesn't Work As Well For Obese And Overweight People

The U.S. CDC says flu season is starting to ramp up — and it's not too late to reduce your risk with a vaccine. But scientists have come to realize that flu vaccines are less effective for people who are overweight or obese. Considering that excess weight affects more than two-thirds of the U.S. adult population, that's a significant shortcoming. Researchers are studying why that's the case, with an eye toward developing better flu vaccines. "What's particularly disturbing for us is the fact that the vaccine doesn't work as well" in this population, says Melinda Beck, a professor of nutrition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She's been studying the effect of obesity on a person's ability to fend off infections

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/11/24/782079520/excess-weight-can-weaken-the-flu-shot>

Patients With Asthma Can Benefit from Getting the Flu Vaccine

Over a period of 6 influenza virus seasons, the seasonal flu vaccine provided meaningful protection for asthma patients, according to the results of a study published in Clinical Infectious Diseases. Investigators from the University of Edinburgh examined patient data from 223 primary care practices in Scotland in order to estimate the effectiveness of the flu vaccine in adults and children with asthma. The patients, including children older than 6 months of age, were seen from the 2010-11 flu season to the 2015-16 season. The study authors explained that having the flu is a trigger for asthma attacks, but uptick of flu vaccines in asthma patients often remains low. They thought concerns about vaccine effectiveness may be behind this low vaccination rate.

<https://www.contagionlive.com/news/patients-with-asthma-can-benefit-from-getting-the-flu-vaccine>

Pediatric influenza news

Pregnant women may not have safety risks with common travel vaccines

Many common travel vaccines don't have known safety risks for pregnant women, although a research review also suggests that evidence is limited for some inoculations. Researchers examined data from trials of common travel vaccines and found high quality evidence that two - the flu vaccine and the Tdap vaccine - are safe for pregnant women and their babies. Beyond these two

vaccines, researchers found moderate or low quality evidence that there are no safety issues with several other common travel vaccines

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-pregnancy-travel/pregnant-women-may-not-have-safety-risks-with-common-travel-vaccines-idUKKBN1XW2AY>

Time to get children vaccinated against flu

Dr Vindi Bhandal, senior partner with Sleaford Medical Group, writes about the flu: 'As we approach the winter season, I would like to remind parents to think about vaccinating children against flu. Flu can be a very unpleasant illness for children and can lead to conditions like bronchitis and pneumonia which may require hospitalisation. The nasal flu spray vaccine is offered every year to young children to help protect against flu.'

<https://www.sleafordstandard.co.uk/health/time-to-get-children-vaccinated-against-flu-1-9152246>

Tracking influenza-like illnesses in schools; activity started early, heightened prevention effort needed

Because flu activity has started earlier than usual, the U.S. CDC is recommending a heightened effort to promote flu prevention. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Kentucky Department of Public Health (KDPH) are partnering to track students with flu-like illnesses in the school setting. Flu-like illnesses should be tracked closely by administrators, school nurses and district health coordinators to determine if the district flu plan should be activated.

<https://www.nkytribune.com/2019/11/tracking-influenza-like-illnesses-in-schools-activity-started-early-heightened-prevention-effort-needed/>

Over 65's influenza news

High-dosage flu shot running out amid high demand

In Canada, the flu season is officially underway as local communities are reporting their first cases of the year. But when it comes to the high-dosage vaccine recommended for at-risk patients, some public health units have run out. Those doses are "prioritized for the frail elderly and seniors in long-term care homes and retirement homes," says Marlene Jantzi-Bauman with the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health unit. High-dosage shots have had a delayed roll-out this year. The province blamed production issues on the manufacturers. So far, 82 per cent of the total order of high-dosage vaccinations has been distributed across the province.

<https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/high-dosage-flu-shot-running-out-amid-high-demand-1.4699263>

Ottawa Public Health runs out of high-dose flu vaccine

Ottawa Public Health has run out of the high-dose flu vaccine that is recommended for people over 65. The high-dose vaccine, which was first available last year, is considered more protective for people over the age of 65 who are at high risk of complications from influenza. Marie-Claude Turcotte, program manager of the immunization unit at Ottawa Public Health, said the public health unit, which distributes the vaccine, is expecting to get more in in early- to mid-December. But she said people over 65 should not wait until then and should get a regular flu shot as soon as possible.

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawa-public-health-runs-out-of-high-dose-flu-vaccine>

General Influenza News

Why our free flu shots actually cost us down the road

In the byzantine world of health-care pricing, most people wouldn't expect that the ubiquitous flu shot could be a prime example of how the system's lack of transparency can lead to disparate costs. The Affordable Care Act requires health insurers to cover all federally recommended vaccines at no charge to patients, including flu immunizations. Although people with insurance pay nothing when they get their shot, many don't realize that their insurers foot the bill — and that those companies will recoup their costs eventually. In one small sample from one insurer, Kaiser Health News found

dramatic differences among the costs for its own employees. At a Sacramento facility, the insurer paid \$85, but just a little more than half that at a clinic in Long Beach. A drugstore in the District was paid \$32. The wide discrepancy in what insurers pay for the same flu shot illustrates what is wrong with America's health system, said Glenn Melnick, a health economist at the University of Southern California.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/why-our-free-flu-shots-actually-cost-us-down-the-road/2019/11/22/8c445d80-0aec-11ea-97ac-a7ccc8dd1ebc_story.html

Additional sources: ([San Francisco Chronicle](#))

Border Patrol denies undocumented immigrants free influenza vaccine

Peak flu season is fast approaching North America and the U.S. government is actively encouraging anyone over 6 months old to vaccinate – that is, unless you are one of the thousands of people being detained in Customs and Border Protection facilities for undocumented entry. “To us in the medical community the situation is alarming. When the CBP stated in August that they weren't planning on vaccinating we saw this as egregious to deny basic health care access to people forced to stay in their care," said Dr. Bonnie Arzuaga, one of the founders of Doctors for Camp Closure. The organization is a volunteer group of 2,000 U.S. based physicians who support the closing of the Customs and Border camps because of public health concerns. The organization volunteered to provide free influenza vaccines to those detained but the government never responded. “We got no response, not even an acknowledgement of the letter," said Arzuaga.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/border-patrol-denies-undocumented-immigrants-free-influenza-vaccine/story?id=67237256>

Additional sources: ([abc7NY](#)) ([Vice](#)) ([WTOP News](#))

Should you have two flu jabs this winter? Injection 'wears off faster than we think'

Earlier this year, Professor Stanley Plotkin, a pioneer of vaccines, revealed that he has two flu jabs. The 87-year-old, from the University of Pennsylvania, has one in early autumn, followed by another in December each year. The reason? The trusted flu jab, it seems, wears off far faster than we think. British experts agree that Prof Plotkin may be on to something. Also, over-65s will receive extra protection this winter because of a new type of 'turbo-jab': it is a new vaccine which protects against three or four strains of flu and also features an adjuvant. This bolsters the immune system's response so that it releases a greater number of infection-fighting antibodies.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-7717781/Should-TWO-flu-jabs-winter-Injection-wears-faster-think.html>

Call for Peterborough flu injection trial for Muslims

Members of the Muslim community across Peterborough have called for an alternative to the flu vaccine, as it contains porcine gelatine. In Luton, Public Health England (PHE) worked with Luton Council of Mosques to deliver a study regarding uptake of a non-pork based flu vaccine. After hearing of this study, local parents said there is a case for the city to be included. Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at PHE said: “Although some faith groups accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products we understand some Muslim families feel uncomfortable about it being in the nasal spray. Parents should seek advice from their doctor, nurse or pharmacist.” The Muslim Council of Great Britain, has advised that the current vaccine can be used if there is no alternative and is considered life saving.

<https://www.peterboroughtoday.co.uk/health/call-for-peterborough-flu-injection-trial-for-muslims-1-9151844>

Free NHS flu vaccines for patients with chronic diseases

In the UK, children and adults living with a long-term health condition are being urged to get a flu jab. The NHS is urging patients who have chronic diseases like diabetes, asthma or a heart condition to have a free NHS flu vaccination. Dr Ed Capo-Bianco, urgent care lead at Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said: “It's very important that patients who have an underlying health

condition don't delay and have a free flu vaccination at their GP practice or a pharmacist."

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/18054447.free-nhs-flu-vaccines-patients-chronic-diseases/>

Efforts to move the needle on flu shot rates get stuck

Most Americans skip the annual flu shot — with the number of dispensed vaccines barely changed in the past decade, despite government removal of cost and access obstacles. About 45% of adults received the flu shot last year, up from about 41% in 2010, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control data. Immunization rates have stayed in the 40% to 45% range for the past decade. Among people 65 and older, who are most at risk for complication of the flu, 68% were inoculated last year, up from 67% in 2010. Vaccination rates, however, have risen for children — increasing to 73% last year from 64% in 2011. That's good news, but public health officials recommend that nearly all people get the flu shot.

https://norfolkdailynews.com/commentary/efforts-to-move-the-needle-on-flu-shot-rates-get/article_ac564830-0d72-11ea-8539-b7262a028d3d.html

France - Through 'GrippeNet.fr', internet users can help track the flu

In France, Inserm gets internet users to help with flu surveillance: there are already 6,000 people registered on GrippeNet.fr, a portal dedicated to flu surveillance and research. In 2012, Sentinelles network and Santé publique France set up the portal, through which they aim to understand the flu better, thanks to data given directly by internet users.

<https://www.parents.fr/actualites/etre-parent/avec-grippenetfr-participez-a-la-surveillance-de-lepidemie-de-grippe-428695>

Flu immunizations in Alberta cross the one million mark

It's been just over a month since Alberta Health Services (AHS) began vaccinating people against influenza and the number of people in the province who've taken advantage of that is now over one million. In weekly influenza stats released by AHS, 1,013,456 people have received immunizations. The Calgary Zone of AHS, which Airdrie is a part of, leads the way with 413,815 people being immunized. The flu season has been slow to ramp up this year. Just 325 lab-confirmed cases of Influenza A and Influenza B have been reported in the province, 154 of those in the Calgary Zone.

<https://discoverairdrie.com/local/flu-immunizations-in-alberta-cross-the-one-million-mark>

54% of diabetics unaware flu can worsen condition: S'pore study

More than half of Singaporean respondents living with diabetes were unaware that a simple flu infection could exacerbate their condition, new research by Temasek Polytechnic showed. Findings from the study released on Friday found that 54 per cent of locals with diabetes did not know that flu could affect their blood sugar levels. 41 per cent indicated that they were not vaccinated against the infection.

<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/54-of-diabetics-unaware-flu-can-worsen-condition-spore-study-075827004.html>

Burden of disease

US flu picks up pace ahead of Thanksgiving

As the U.S. head into the Thanksgiving holiday week, flu levels continue to rise, with most of the activity occurring in southern and western states, the CDC said in its latest update. Nationally, the percentage of clinic visits for flulike illness last week rose to 2.5%, putting it above the overall baseline of 2.4% for the first time. However, some regions of the country have been above their specific baselines for a few weeks now, and currently, 4 of 10 are above their baselines. Another key indicator that rose last week is the percentage of respiratory specimens that tested positive for flu, which rose to 7.3%, up from the previous week. The CDC said it received a report of one more pediatric flu death which was linked to a 2009 H1N1 virus. So far, four pediatric flu deaths have been reported for the new flu season.

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2019/11/us-flu-picks-pace-ahead-thanksgiving>

Additional sources: ([CBS Pittsburgh](#)) ([MSN.com](#)) ([Healthline](#))

Influenza cases in Arizona are three times higher in 2019

The Arizona Department of Health Services reported Friday that influenza cases in the state have tripled compared to previous seasons at this time. More than half of reported cases this season are in infants, children, and adolescents, according to a release. So far this flu season, 950 laboratory-confirmed influenza cases have been reported compared to 290 cases for the same time period in 2018, the ADHS states. All counties in Arizona have reported flu cases.

<https://www.yourvalley.net/stories/influenza-cases-arizona-three-times-higher-2019.117231>

Additional sources: ([KYMA](#))

Latest numbers show flu activity on the rise across Ga. and Ala.

Recent updated numbers show flu activity is on the rise across the Peach State and across Alabama. The latest numbers show moderate flu activity across Georgia. The new numbers show more activity compared to the low activity reported the week before. One new outbreak was reported to the Georgia Department of Public Health. The percentage of outpatient visits for flu-like symptoms was above the regional baseline at just over 4 percent.

<https://www.wsfa.com/2019/11/24/latest-numbers-show-flu-activity-rise-across-ga-ala/>

'This could signify we are in for a rough season': Two more flu deaths reported in county

The Southern Nevada Health District is reporting some concerning news this flu season: two more people died this week, bringing the total death count to 3. Local health experts say those numbers could get even higher. Nationally, doctors predicted this flu season would be an aggressive one, based on Australia's past season. And locally, experts say this season will be 'more severe than normal'. We've also seen one group hit harder---all three of the recent Clark County deaths have been seniors 65 or older.

<http://news3lv.com/news/local/this-could-signify-we-are-in-for-a-rough-season-two-more-flu-deaths-reported-in-county>

Flu Surveillance in Animals

No News Recorded