



EID Weekly Updates:

Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases, Region of the Americas

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Update on Influenza in the Americas

United States (USA): Influenza activity in the USA continued to increase during Epidemiological Week (EW) 45 (2–8 November 2003). WHO (World Health Organization) and NSSREV (National Surveillance System of Respiratory and Enteric Viruses) collaborating laboratories tested 1,056 samples for influenza, of which 203 (19.2%) were positive: 170 for unsubtyped Influenza A, 30 for Influenza A Subtype H3N2, 3 for Influenza B. The percentage of positive samples increased from 7.9% during EW 44 to 19.2% for this week. A review of national virological surveillance data from the 1976–1977 season to the present shows this to be the earliest week in which the percentage of positive specimens has exceeded 10% nationally; the South Central and the Mountain regions presented the greatest percentage of positive specimens, with 46.5% and 34.7%, respectively. The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was 6.2%, below epidemic threshold for this week.

Source: [Influenza Summary Update, Week Ending November 8, 2003—Week 45, Influenza: Reports & Surveillance Methods in the United States](#). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (CDC), National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID).

The Department of Health and Human Services of the United States (DHHS) is engaged in an intense public-information campaign, urging people to get their flu shot. Health authorities have noticed that this flu season is expected to be much more severe than the previous one. In a press release published on 17 November 2003, Dr. Gerberding announced a new strain of the Influenza A virus, Subtype H3N2 Fujian, that is not included in this year's vaccine for the northern hemisphere. The vaccine protects against three strains of flu: H3N2 Panama, H1N1 New Caledonia, and Influenza B Hong Kong. However, experiments with animals suggest that the vaccine will provide cross-protection against the Fujian strain. For more information, consult the source below.

Source: [CDC News Conference Transcript: Update on Current Influenza Season](#). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (CDC).

Canada: During EW 45 (2–8 November 2003), widespread influenza activity was reported in all regions in Saskatchewan. Localized activity was reported throughout all of Alberta and the Northwest Territories, as well as in two regions of Ontario and one region of British Columbia. For this week, Health Canada received 1,954 reports of laboratory tests for influenza, of which 381 (19.5%) were positive for Influenza A. From the beginning of this year's season (beginning on 24 August 2003) to date, the National Microbiology Laboratory has antigenically characterized 14 specimens, all of them A/Panama/2007/99-like, which is included in the vaccine for the current season.

Source: *FluWatch: November 2 to November 8, 2003 (Week 45)*. Health Canada: [English](#) | [français](#)

Hepatitis A Outbreak in the United States

USA, 15 November 2003: The Food and Drug Administration of the United States (FDA) is warning the public that several of the recent Hepatitis A outbreaks have been associated with the consumption of raw or semi-cooked green onions (scallions). The outbreaks associated with this vegetable being served in restaurants occurred in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia last September.

Another outbreak during late October and early November of this year occurred among customers at a restaurant in Pennsylvania, though its source has not been established. Pennsylvania health authorities, the CDC, and the FDA are investigating whether a specific food is associated to with the Pennsylvania outbreak and, if so, its source. More than 500 cases have been reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Sources

- [FDA Talk Paper: Consumers Advised That Recent Hepatitis A Outbreaks Have Been Associated With Green Onions](#). Food and Drug Administration of the United States (FDA).
- [Response by Dr. Gerberding made during CDC News Conference Transcript: Update on Current Influenza Season](#), *op. cit.* CDC.

Update on West Nile Virus (WNV) in the Americas

USA: During EW 45, 12 states reported a total of 176 human WNV cases (Arizona, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Virginia), including 2 fatalities in Louisiana. During the same period, infections were reported in 39 dead birds, 12 mosquito pools, 93 horses, 1 cat, and 5 dogs.

Source: [West Nile Virus Activity—United States, November 6–12, 2003](#). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports (MMWR)*, November 14, 2003 / 52 (45); 1105-1106. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (CDC).

Mexico: The CDC journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID)* published an article presenting evidence of the spread of WNV in Mexico since 2002. This article can

be consulted via the source below.

Source: [Dispatch: West Nile Virus in Mexico: Evidence of Widespread Circulation since July 2002](#) (Estrada-Franco et al.). *Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID)*. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control of the United States (CDC).

Electronic Information Sources on the Occurrence and Distribution of Communicable Diseases in the Countries of Americas

(Sources provided in language of country; EW = Epidemiological Week; CAREC = Caribbean Epidemiology Centre, serving the English-speaking Caribbean.)

Country	Year	Last EW published	Current EW	Source & Link
Argentina	2003	EW 44	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud, Dirección de Epidemiología, Última Semana Epidemiológica
Bolivia	2003	EW 46	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud y Deportes
Brazil	2002	December	EW 46	Ministério da Saúde, Fundação Nacional da Saúde (FUNASA), Boletim eletrônico epidemiológico
Canada	2003	EW 45	EW 46	Health Canada, Notifiable Diseases Monthly Report / Rapport mensuel des maladies à déclaration obligatoire , Communicable Disease Report / Relève des maladies transmissibles au Canada (CCDR/RMTC)
Chile	2003	EW 35	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud, <i>Boletín Electrónico Mensual de Vigilancia Epidemiológica e-vigía</i>
Colombia	2003	EW 35	EW 46	Ministerio de la Protección Social, Dirección de Salud Pública, Sistema de Vigilancia en Salud Pública (SIVIGILA), Boletín Epidemiológico Semanal
Costa Rica	2003	EW 20	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud, Sistema Nacional de Vigilancia en Salud, Boletín epidemiológico
Cuba	2003	EW 44	EW 46	Instituto de Medicina Tropical "Pedro Kourí" (IPK) Boletín epidemiológico semanal
El Salvador	2003	EW 45	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud y Asistencia Social, Vigilancia Epidemiológica Año 2003

Guatemala	2003	September (EW 39)	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud Pública, Última Semana Epidemiológica
Mexico	2003	November (EW 44)	EW 46	Secretaría de Salud, Estadísticas en Salud, Boletín Epidemiología
Nicaragua	2003	October (EW 41)	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud (MINSa), Vigilancia Epidemiológica, Boletines epidemiológicos
Peru	2003	October (EW 43)	EW 46	Oficina General Epidemiología (OGE), Boletín epidemiológico
Puerto Rico	2003	January (EW 5)	EW 46	Departamento de Salud, Boletín epidemiológico
USA	2003	EW 45	EW 46	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports (MMWR)
Venezuela	2003	October (EW 43)	EW 46	Ministerio de Salud y Desarrollo Social, Estadísticas, Alerta epidemiológico
English and Dutch Caribbean				
Anguilla	2003	EW 38	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Antigua & Barbuda	2003	EW 28	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Bahamas	2003	EW 37	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Barbados	2003	EW 29	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Belize	2003	EW 34	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Bermuda	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
British Virgin Islands	2003	EW 35	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Cayman Islands	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Dominica	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Grenada	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Guyana	2003	EW 21	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Jamaica	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Montserrat	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
St. Lucia	2003	EW 39	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
St. Kitts & Nevis	2003	EW 35	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)

St. Vicente & the Grenadines	2003	EW 37	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Suriname	2003	EW 34	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Trinidad & Tobago	2003	EW 27	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Turks & Caicos Islands	2003	EW 35	EW 46	CAREC Surveillance Report (CSR)
Source: List compiled by PAHO Communicable Disease Unit, Emerging and Reemerging Diseases.				

Erratum: In Table 1 on yellow fever in last week's updates (No. 19, 12 November 2003), the total number of deaths should have been 96, not 99. The error in last week's issue has been corrected.