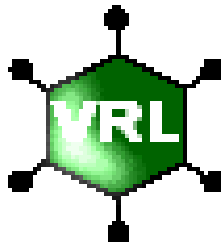


# Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



**Week 1 2003**

**Report produced: 08/01/2003**

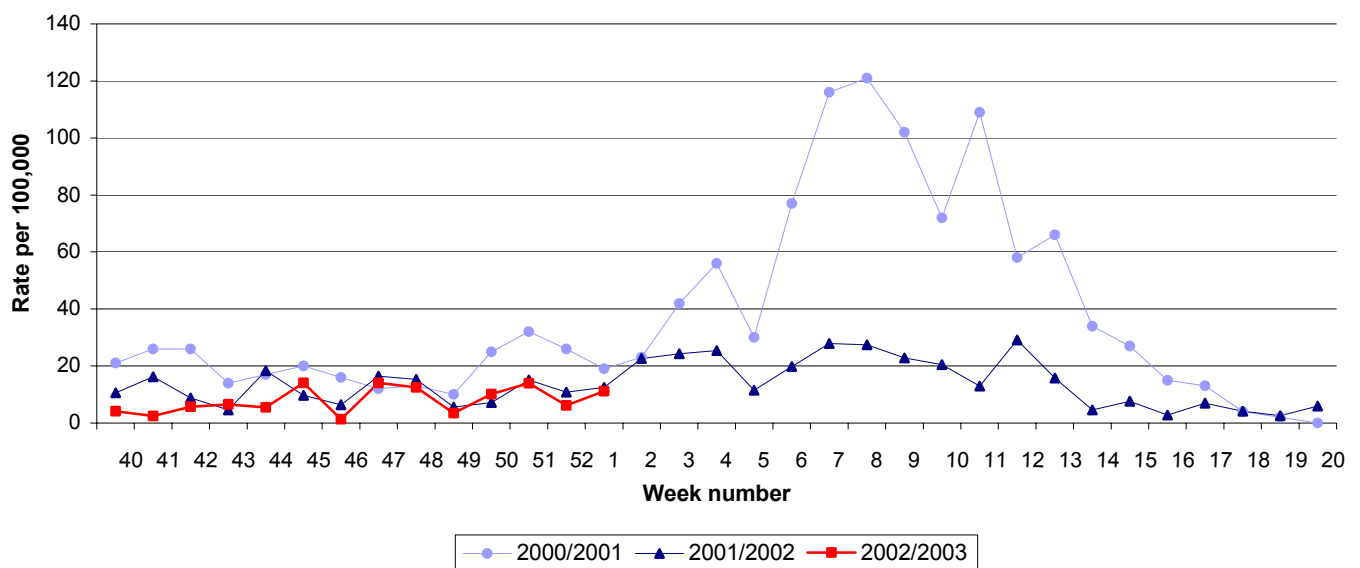
**This report is produced in collaboration with the Departments of Public Health**

## Summary

The sentinel GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness remains at low levels. Influenza virus has not been detected this season in sentinel or non-sentinel specimens.

## Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 1 2003 (the week ending the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2003), 8 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 11.1 per 100,000 population. Twenty-seven (81.8%) of the 33 sentinel general practices reported during week 1, with 6 sentinel practices reporting ILI (figure 1).



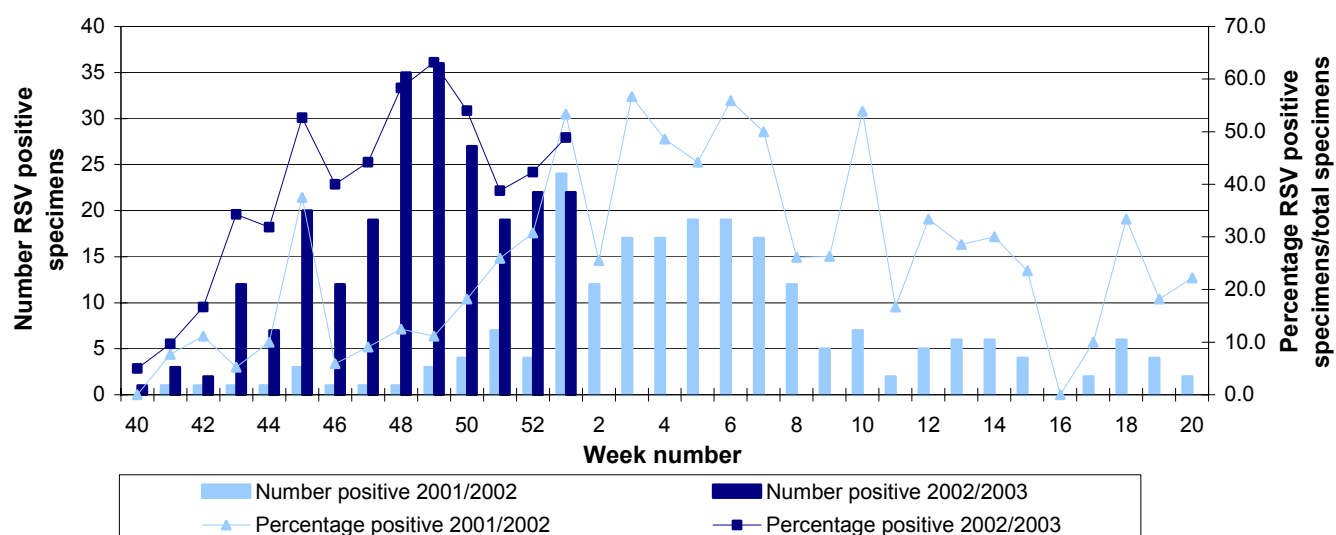
**Figure 1:** GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

## Virological data

The National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 7 swabs from sentinel GPs during week 1, all of which were negative for influenza virus (table 1). There have been no positive detections of influenza virus this season. During week 1, 45 respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources (mainly hospitals) were referred to the NVRL, 22 (48.9%) were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The number and percentage of respiratory specimens positive for RSV peaked in week 49. Since the start of the 2002/2003-influenza season, 225 (41.4%) of 544 respiratory specimens were positive for RSV. This is compared to 52 (20.9%) of 248 respiratory specimens positive for RSV during the same period in the 2001/2002 influenza season (RSV; figure 2). One respiratory specimen was positive for adenovirus during week 1.

**Table 1: Sentinel influenza results by type, subtype and report week for 2002/2003**

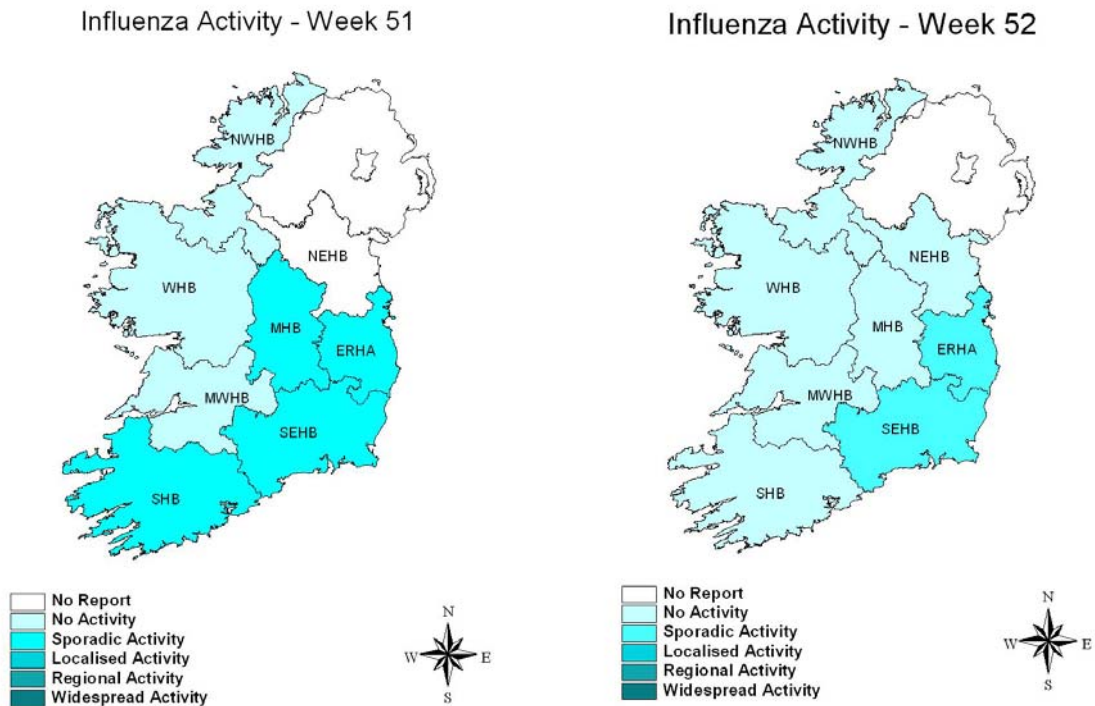
<i>Week number</i>	<i>Total swabs</i>	<i>Positive swabs</i>	<i>Percentage positive</i>	<i>A (unsubtyped)</i>	<i>A (H1N1)</i>	<i>A (H1N2)</i>	<i>A (H3N2)</i>	<i>B</i>
40	4	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
41	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
42	4	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
43	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
44	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
45	7	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
46	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
47	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
48	6	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
49	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
50	5	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
51	8	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
52	4	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
1	7	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



**Figure 2:** Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

**Influenza activity by health board/authority**

Influenza activity is reported on a weekly basis from the Departments of Public Health. Influenza activity is based on sentinel GP ILI consultation rates, laboratory confirmed cases of influenza, sentinel hospital admissions data, and/or sentinel school absenteeism data. Between week 40 and week 50 2002, little or no influenza activity was reported in most health boards. During week 51, sporadic influenza activity was reported in four health boards/authority; however in week 52 no influenza activity was reported in most health boards (figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Maps of influenza activity by health boards/authority during weeks 51 & 52 2002

### Influenza activity in Northern Ireland

During week 1 2003, 22 of the 24 sentinel GPs reported representing 8% of the population. The combined rate for influenza and ILI was 42.2 per 100,000. Influenza virus has not been detected this season either through sentinel or non-sentinel surveillance. <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/>

### Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales

In England, GP consultations for ILI increased from a revised rate of 16.9 per 100,000 in week 52 to a rate of 27.2 per 100,000 in week 1. In Wales, the GP consultation rate for ILI also increased from a rate of 2.8 per 100,000 in week 52 to 8.4 per 100,000 in week 1. In Scotland, the consultation rate increased from a rate of 34.0 per 100,000 in week 52 to 41.0 per 100,000 in week 1. There were 6 positive detections of influenza viruses from specimens referred to the ERNVL in week 1, 3 A(H3) and 3 B viruses. Two of the influenza B virus detections were from Scotland. Since week 40, there have been 9 positive detections of influenza A viruses [5 A(H3N2), 2 A(H3) & 2 A (unsubtyped)] and 5 influenza B viruses. All isolates reported so far this season are similar to the current vaccine strains.

[http://www.phls.co.uk/topics\\_az/influenza/fluactivity0203.htm](http://www.phls.co.uk/topics_az/influenza/fluactivity0203.htm)

### Influenza activity in Europe

During week 52, 11 networks reporting to the European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS) reported no influenza activity, 4 reported sporadic activity and one (France) reported regional activity. The clinical data for week 52 should be interpreted with caution, due to the Christmas holiday period. The number of sentinel specimens was also low due to the holiday period. During week 52, in France, 5 sentinel

specimens were positive for influenza B, 3 sentinel specimens for influenza A (unsubtyped), and 5 non-sentinel specimens were positive for influenza B. One sentinel specimen and 5 non-sentinel specimens were positive for influenza B in Spain and Portugal, respectively. All of the influenza viruses detected/isolated to date this season by countries reporting to EISS have been closely related to this season's vaccine. <http://www.eiss.org/index.cgi>

### **Influenza activity in Canada**

During week 52, sporadic influenza activity was reported in 3 regions, 7 provinces reported no activity and 3 provinces did not report. Sentinel physicians reported 26 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits. Health Canada received 1270 reports of laboratory tests for influenza: 9.6% were positive for influenza A. All influenza virus strains antigenically characterised this season are closely related to the current vaccine strains. Detection of all other respiratory viruses circulating remains within the expected rates, however RSV positive detections continue to rise. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/fluwatch/index.html>

### **Influenza activity in the United States**

During week 52 in the US, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for ILI was greater than the national baseline. Five state and territorial health departments reported regional influenza activity, 22 reported sporadic activity and 19 reported no influenza activity. The WHO and NREVSS laboratories reported 924 specimens tested for influenza virus: one was positive for A (H1), 4 for A (unsubtyped) and 13 for B. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm>

### **Influenza activity Worldwide**

No influenza activity was reported in Argentina and Iceland during week 52. Sporadic influenza activity was reported in Israel (4 influenza B viruses detected), Hong Kong [7 influenza A (H3N2) and 19 B viruses detected], the Russian Federation [1 influenza A (H3N2) virus detected], Egypt [8 influenza A (H3N2) viruses detected] and French Guiana during week 52. <http://oms2.b3e.jussieu.fr/flunet/>

**This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.**