

Influenza Weekly Surveillance Report



A REPORT BY THE HEALTH PROTECTION SURVEILLANCE CENTRE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE IRISH COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS, THE NATIONAL VIRUS REFERENCE LABORATORY & THE DEPARTMENTS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Week 43 2007 (22nd – 28th October 2007)

Summary

During week 43 2007, influenza activity was at low levels in Ireland, as expected for the time of year. Twelve influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported by sentinel GPs during this period. No positive influenza specimens were detected by the NVRL during week 43 2007.

Background

This is the eighth season of influenza surveillance using computerised sentinel general practices in Ireland. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) is working in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) and the Departments of Public Health on this sentinel surveillance project. Forty-nine sentinel general practices have been recruited to report on the number of patients with ILI on a weekly basis. ILI is defined as the sudden onset of symptoms with a temperature

of 38°C or more, with two or more of the following: headache, sore throat, dry cough and myalgia. Sentinel GPs send a combined nasal and throat swab, to the NVRL, on at least one patient per week where a clinical diagnosis of ILI is made during the influenza season. This report includes data on ILI cases reported by sentinel GPs, influenza test results from the NVRL, influenza notifications, registered deaths attributed to influenza, and regional influenza activity reported by the Departments of Public Health.

Results

Clinical Data

Twelve ILI cases were reported from sentinel GPs during week 43 2007, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 10.0 per 100,000 population, an increase from the updated rate of 5.3 per 100,000 in week 42 2007 (figure 1). Only 33 of 49 (67.3%) sentinel general practices reported during week 43 2007, with six reporting ILI cases.

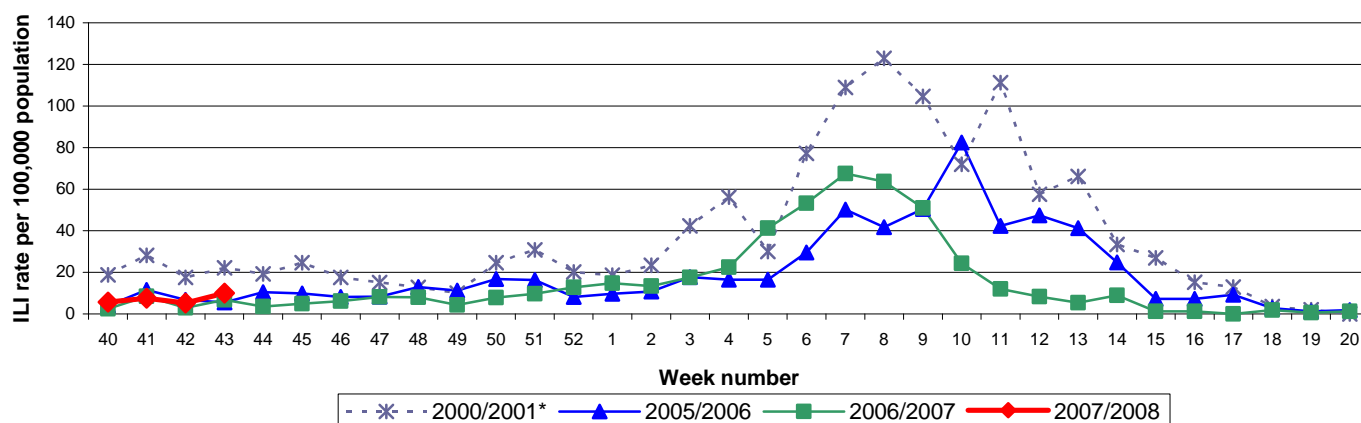


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 population by week, during the 2000/2001*, 2005/2006, 2006/2007 & 2007/2008 influenza seasons *Highest recorded levels of ILI activity since initiation of sentinel surveillance

Results (continued)

Two ILI cases were reported in the 5-14 year age group (12.5 per 100,000 population) and ten ILI cases were reported in the 15-64 year age group (12.1 per 100,000 population), as shown in figure 2. No ILI cases were reported in the 0-4 year age group or in those aged 65 years or older.

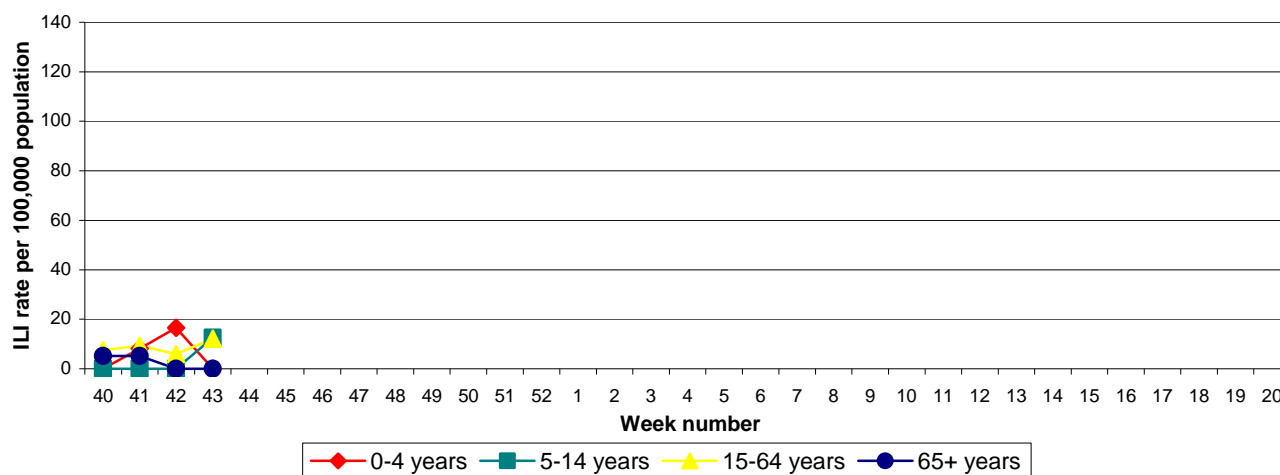


Figure 2: Age specific GP consultation rate* for ILI per 100,000 population by week during the 2007/2008 influenza season
*Please note the denominator used in the age specific consultation rate is from the 2006 census data; this assumes that the age distribution of the sentinel general practices is similar to the national age distribution.

Virological Data from the NVRL

The NVRL tested six specimens taken by sentinel GPs during week 43 2007, all of which were negative for influenza virus. The NVRL also tested 47 non-sentinel specimens taken during week 43 2007, mainly from hospitalised paediatric cases. All non-sentinel specimens were negative for influenza virus and eight were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (table 1). To date this season, only one specimen (from sentinel sources) has tested positive for influenza virus, influenza A (H3).

Influenza positive specimens by HSE-Area and age group (in years), for week 43 2007 and the 2007/2008 season to date are shown in tables 2 and 3, respectively. Figure 3 compares the ILI consultation rates by season and the number of positive influenza specimens tested by the NVRL. Figure 4 compares the number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 influenza seasons.

Table 1: Number of sentinel and non-sentinel* respiratory specimens and positive results for week 43 2007 and the 2007/2008 season to date

Week Number	Specimen Type	Total Specimens	No. Influenza Positive	% Influenza Positive	Influenza A	Influenza B	RSV
43 2007	Sentinel	6	0	0.0	0	0	NA
	Non-Sentinel	47	0	0.0	0	0	8
	Total	53	0	0.0	0	0	8
Season to date	Sentinel	21	1	4.8	1	0	NA
	Non-Sentinel	188	0	0.0	0	0	30
	Total	209	1	0.5	1	0	30

*Please note that non-sentinel specimens include all specimens referred to the NVRL, these specimens are mainly from hospitals and some GPs and may include more than one specimen from each case

Table 2: Total number of sentinel and non-sentinel* influenza A and B positive specimens by HSE-Area for week 43 2007 and the 2007/2008 season to date

	Week 43 2007			Season to date		
	Flu A	Flu B	Total	Flu A	Flu B	Total
HSE-ER	0	0	0	0	0	0
HSE-M	0	0	0	0	0	0
HSE-MW	0	0	0	0	0	0
HSE-NE	0	0	0	0	0	0
HSE-NW	0	0	0	0	0	0
HSE-SE	0	0	0	0	0	0
HSE-S	0	0	0	1	0	1
HSE-W	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1

* Please note that non-sentinel specimens include all specimens referred to the NVRL, these specimens are mainly from hospitals and some GPs and may include more than one specimen from each case

Table 3: Total number of sentinel and non-sentinel* influenza A and B positive specimens by age group (in years) for week 43 2007 and the 2007/2008 season to date

	Week 43 2007			Season to date		
	Flu A	Flu B	Total	Flu A	Flu B	Total
0-4 years	0	0	0	0	0	0
5-14 years	0	0	0	0	0	0
15-64 years	0	0	0	1	0	1
65 years and older	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age group unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1

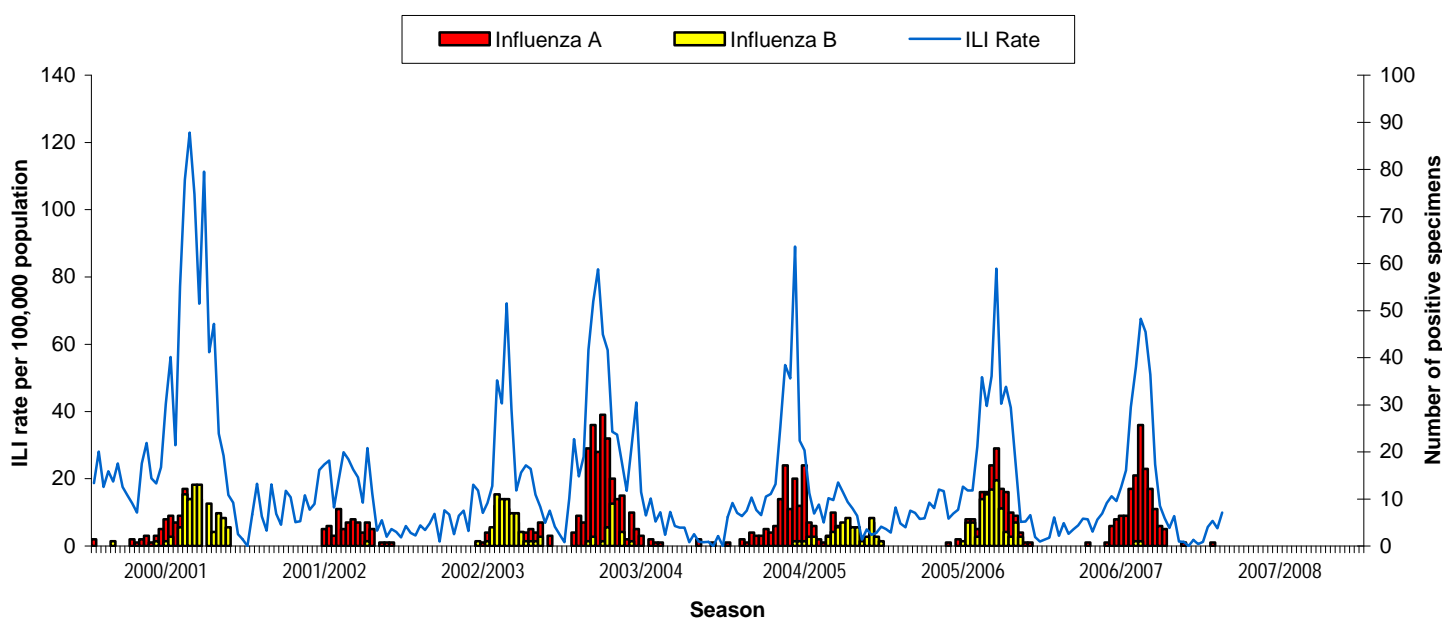


Figure 3: GP ILI consultation rate per 100,000 population and the number of positive influenza specimens detected by the NVRL by week and season, 2000/2001 - 2007/2008

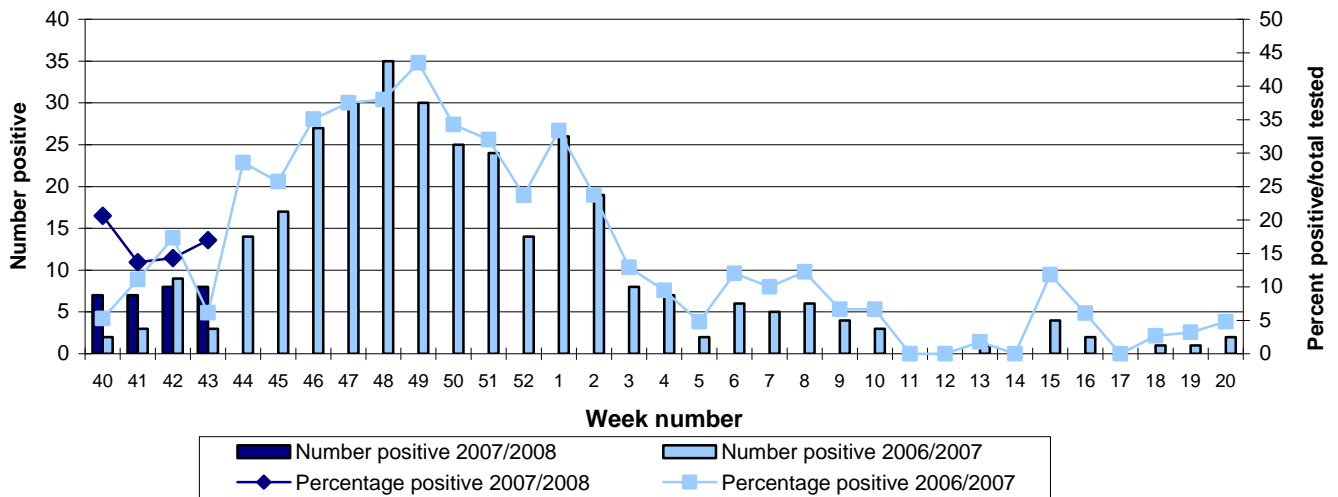


Figure 4. Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 influenza seasons

Weekly Influenza Notifications

No influenza cases were notified to HPSC during week 43 2007. Influenza cases notified to HPSC during the summer of 2007 and during the 2007/2008 influenza season are shown in figure 5 and compared to GP ILI consultation rates.

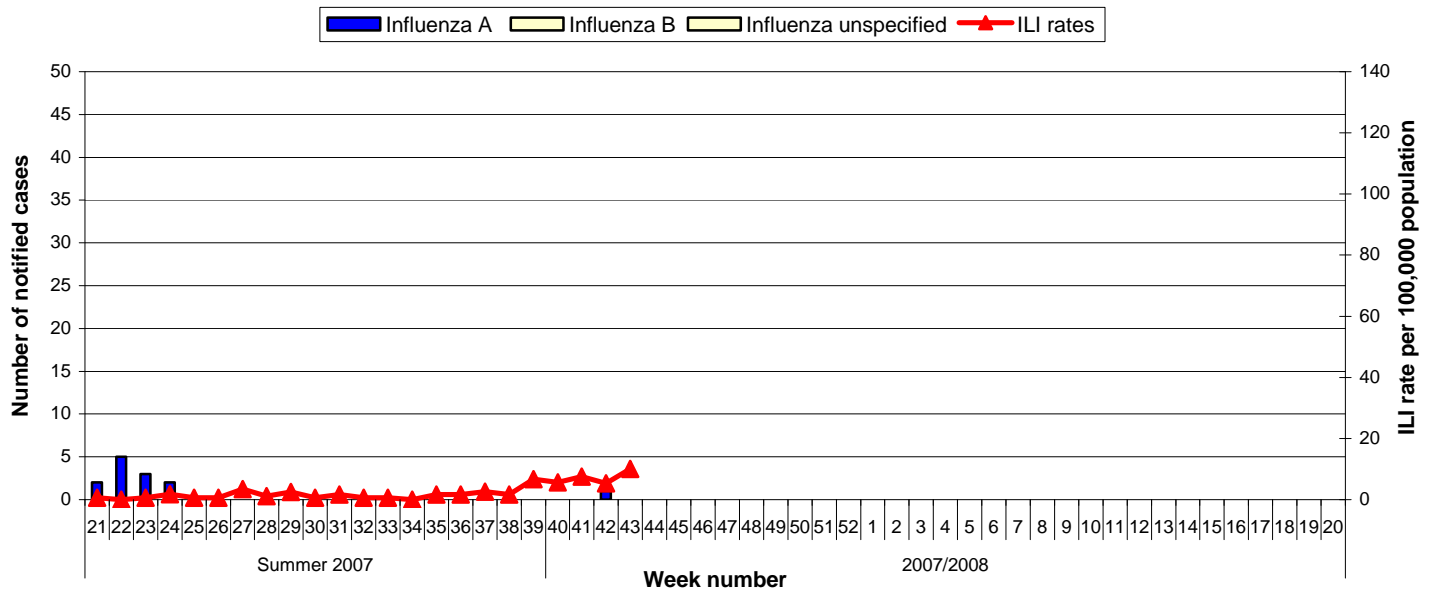


Figure 5: Number of notifications* of influenza (possible & confirmed) by type and by week of notification compared to sentinel GP ILI consultation rates per 100,000 population during the summer of 2007 and the 2007/2008 influenza season
 *Notification data are provisional and were extracted from [CIDR](#) on the 01/11/2007 at 09.27

Mortality Data

No influenza associated deaths were registered with the GRO and reported to HPSC to date this season.

Outbreak Reports

No ILI/influenza outbreaks have been reported to HPSC to date this season.

Regional Influenza Activity by HSE-Area

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 influenza cases and ILI/influenza outbreaks. Each Department of Public Health has established one sentinel hospital in each HSE-Area, to report total hospital admissions, accident and emergency admissions and respiratory admissions data on a weekly basis. Sentinel primary and secondary schools were also established in each HSE-Area in close proximity to the sentinel GPs, reporting absenteeism data on a weekly basis. Increased absenteeism was reported in one sentinel primary school in HSE-M and in four sentinel secondary schools (HSE-E, -MW, -NE, and -SE) during week 42 2007. Increased absenteeism during week 42 2007, was mainly due to school mid-term breaks. Increased absenteeism in one sentinel secondary school in HSE-NW during week 43 2007 was associated with reports of gastrointestinal symptoms. A slight increase in respiratory admissions was reported in sentinel hospitals in HSE-E, -NW and -W, although the levels are as expected for the time of year. During week 42 2007, sporadic influenza activity (based on isolated cases of ILI) was reported in four HSE-Areas: HSE-E, -NE, -MW, and -W. No influenza activity was reported in HSE-NW, -M, -SE and -S during week 42 2007 (figure 6).

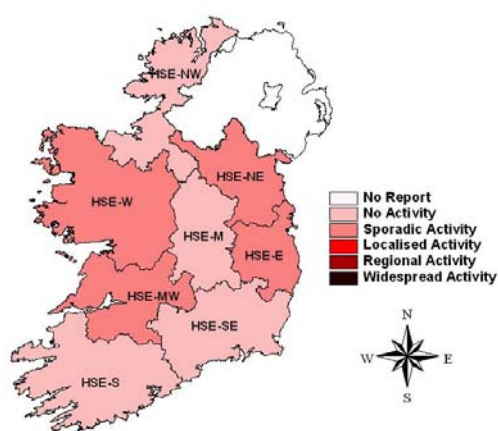


Figure 6: Map of influenza activity by HSE-Health Area during week 42 2007

Influenza Activity in Northern Ireland

During week 43 2007, two cases of clinical influenza and 19 ILI cases were reported in Northern Ireland, corresponding to a combined rate of 16.4 per 100,000 population, a slight decrease from the updated rate of 20.2 per 100,000 for week 42 2007. Twenty-three non-sentinel and three sentinel swabs were tested during week 43 2007, none of which were positive for influenza virus. <http://www.cdscni.org.uk>

Influenza Activity in England, Scotland & Wales

During weeks 42 and 43 2007, influenza activity remained low and stable across England and Wales, while a slight increase was reported in Scotland. Influenza activity was below baseline threshold levels. No samples referred to the Centre for Infections' Respiratory Virus Unit tested positive for influenza during weeks 42 or 43 2007. To date this season, three influenza viruses have been isolated: two influenza A (H1) and one influenza B. <http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics%5Faz/influenza/seasonal/flureports0708.htm>

Influenza Activity in Europe

Levels of influenza activity are currently low in Europe. During week 42 2007, sporadic influenza activity was reported in France and 25 countries reported no influenza activity. In the last four weeks, the consultation rates for ILI and/or acute respiratory infections (ARI) have been at levels usually observed outside the winter period. To date this season, 18 cases of influenza A (8 A untyped, 6 A H1 and 4 A H3) and nine cases of influenza B have been reported in Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Based on the antigenic and/or genetic characterisation of three influenza viruses, two were A/Solomon Island/3/2006 (H1N1)-like and one was B/Florida/4/2006-like (the B/Yamagata/16/88 lineage). It is too early to say which virus type or subtype will become dominant in Europe this season. <http://www.eiss.org/index.cgi>

Influenza Activity in Canada

During week 42 2007, influenza activity increased in Alberta where localised activity was reported while influenza activity remained low in the rest of Canada. The ILI consultation rate remained similar to previous weeks (12 per 1,000 patient visits) and within the expected range. In week 42 2007, 10 of the 1,238 (0.8%) specimens tested were positive for influenza virus: nine influenza A and one influenza B. Of the influenza detections to date, 88% (15/17) were influenza A and 12% (2/17) were influenza B. Four influenza viruses have been characterised this season, two A/Wisconsin/67/2005(H3N2)-like viruses and two B/Florida/07/2004-like viruses belonging to the B/Yamagata/16/1988 lineage. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index.html>

Influenza Activity in the United States

During week 42 2007, a low level of influenza activity was reported in the United States. Thirteen states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico reported sporadic influenza activity; and 37 states reported no influenza activity. The proportion of outpatient visits for ILI and ARI was below national and region-specific baseline levels. Twenty-nine (2.2%) specimens tested by U.S. WHO and NREVSS laboratories were positive for influenza: 2 A (H1) and 29 A (unsubtyped). The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was slightly above the epidemic threshold. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm>

Influenza Activity Worldwide

During week 42 2007, sporadic influenza activity was reported in China (1 A H1, 9 A H3, 2 A unsubtyped and 26 B) and no influenza activity was reported in Sri-Lanka and Tunisia. One influenza B detection was reported in Iran and 6 influenza A(H1) virus detections were reported from Japan during week 42 2007.

<http://gamapserver.who.int/GlobalAtlas/home.asp>

Avian Influenza

As of the 31st of October 2007, 333 confirmed human cases and 204 (61.3%) deaths from avian influenza A (H5N1) have been reported to the WHO from Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam. The Ministry of Health of Indonesia has announced a new case of human infection of H5N1 avian influenza. A 3-year-old male from Banten Province developed symptoms on the 14th October 2007 and has recovered. The investigation found that there were poultry deaths in the case's household prior to his onset of symptoms. Of the 111 cases confirmed to date in Indonesia, 89 have been fatal.

Further information on avian influenza is available on the following websites:

WHO http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/

HPSC <http://www.ndsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Respiratory/AvianInfluenza/>

ECDC <http://www.ecdc.eu.int/>

Northern Hemisphere Influenza Vaccine for the 2007/2008 Season

The members of the WHO Collaborating Centres on Influenza have recommended that influenza vaccines for the 2007/2008 influenza season in the Northern Hemisphere contain the following strains:

- an A/Solomon Islands/3/2006 (H1N1)-like virus
- an A/Wisconsin/67/2005 (H3N2)-like virus^a
- a B/Malaysia/2506/2004-like virus

Candidate vaccine viruses include:

- ^aA/Wisconsin/67/2005 (H3N2) and A/Hiroshima/52/2005

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/recommendations2007north/en/print.html>

Further information on influenza can be found on the [HPSC website](#)

Acknowledgements

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This report was produced by Dr. Lisa Domegan and Dr. Joan O'Donnell, HPSC