

IN THIS ISSUE: Increased Acute Respiratory Illnesses in Washoe County

INCREASED ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES IN WASHOE COUNTY

During the two week period from February 6 through February 19, 2019, the Washoe County Health District (WCHD) has opened eight (8) influenza like illness (ILI) outbreak investigations in eight public schools. Some of these outbreaks were lab-confirmed as influenza. According to findings from WCHD’s ILI sentinel surveillance system, as of week 6 ending on February 9th, the percentage of persons seen locally with ILI increased to 3.1%, which was above the regional baseline of 2.3%. According to the findings from Washoe County’s syndromic surveillance system, emergency department (ED) visits due to fever or respiratory illnesses or ILI syndromes increased significantly during this recent two week period. The age group 5-17 years, i.e., school populations were hit hardest. However, the exact causes are unknown. It is hypothesized that the annual Super Bowl on Sunday, February 3 and recent extremely cold weather and storms might have increased the number of people congregating indoors and, therefore, could have contributed to disease transmission. Extremely cold air may be another trigger for patients with asthma to have increased ED visits due to respiratory illnesses. However, these are just hypotheses; no official epidemiological study has been done.

In this issue, findings from WCHD’s syndromic surveillance system will be shared and a few recommendations are made for local healthcare providers.

Findings from syndromic surveillance system

Figure 1. Percentage (%) of ED Visits due to Fever in Children Ages 5-17 Years, Washoe County, 9/30/18-2/16/19

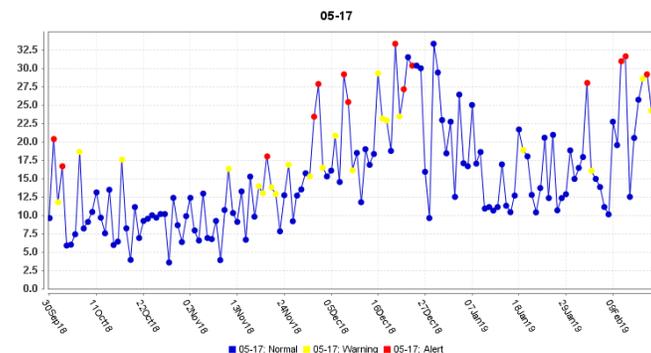


Figure 2. Percentage (%) of ED Visits due to Respiratory Illnesses in Children Ages 5-17 Years, Washoe County, 9/30/18-2/16/19

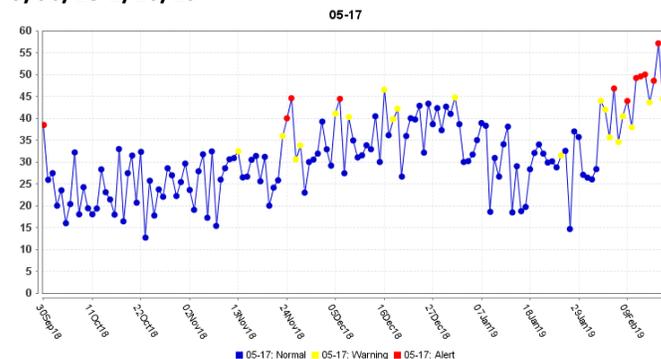
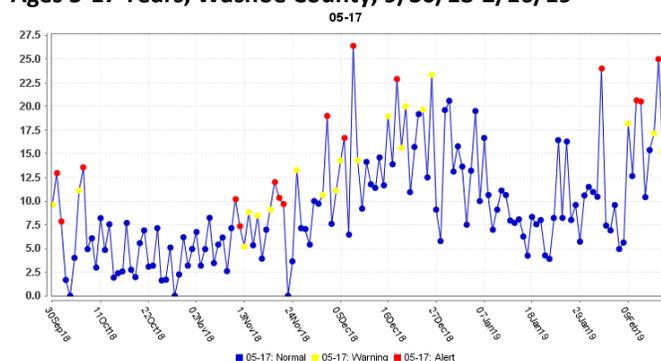


Figure 3. Percentage (%) of ED Visits due to ILI in Children Ages 5-17 Years, Washoe County, 9/30/18-2/16/19



Recommendations from WCHD

1. Advise your patients (0-17 years) to stay away from daycare or school if they have a fever until 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication.
2. Advise ALL of your patients to keep a good social distancing when they are ill, e.g., avoid parties, church gatherings, sports events, choirs, etc.
3. Encourage your patients to practice good respiratory etiquette and thorough hand washing with soap and water.
4. Advise your patients to increase the frequency of cleaning high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, phones, etc.) at home.
5. It is not too late to advise your patients to receive influenza vaccine if they have not received it so far. CDC released its interim estimates of vaccine effectiveness for this season’s flu vaccine on February 15, 2019¹. The seasonal flu vaccine is reducing the overall risk of having to seek medical care for flu by about half (47%) in general population, about 61% in children ages 6 months -17 years.

Please call WCHD at 775-328-2447 for questions.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6806a2.htm?s_cid=mm6806a2_e