



December 17, 2014

The 2014-2015 influenza season has begun, and influenza activity is increasing throughout the country. Currently, influenza A (H3N2) viruses are being identified most frequently and have been detected in nearly all states. Previous influenza A (H3N2)-predominant seasons have been associated with higher rates of influenza-associated hospitalization and mortality.

Current information at CDC indicates that the majority of the influenza A (H3N2) viruses circulating this season are different (i.e., have “drifted”) from the H3N2 component in all formulations of the 2014-2015 vaccine. This means that the 2014-2015 influenza vaccine may be less effective in preventing influenza illness and complications. For this reason, CDC is emphasizing the importance of using influenza antiviral medications, in a timely fashion, to treat and prevent illness this season, in persons for whom they are indicated. CDC has issued online guidance at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00374.asp> describing the current situation, which summarizes recommendations for influenza antiviral medication use.

As influenza activity increases across the United States, there may be earlier and larger than usual increases in local demand for influenza antiviral medications. In some jurisdictions, the demand for influenza antiviral medication this season may exceed that of previous seasons. Thus, we encourage all pharmacies to ensure that they have a sufficient supply of influenza antiviral medications on pharmacy shelves to support an early and high-usage season— this includes Tamiflu® capsules, Tamiflu® suspension, and Relenza®.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns about the current recommendations. You can direct inquiries to [fluoutbreak@cdc.gov](mailto:fluoutbreak@cdc.gov). We encourage you to distribute this message widely to the pharmacies in your network and your distributor(s) of influenza antiviral medications. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Bresee".

Dr. Joseph Bresee, MD

Influenza Division

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention