

IMMUNIZATION Update

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Immunization Update

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Question of the week

Our answers to vaccine misinformation



Need an easy and fun way to share the facts about vaccines?

There's a quiz for that.

LDH's Immunization Program has developed a series of quizzes covering vaccines for children and every adult life stage. Each quiz offers essential information about how immunizations protect us, counter misinformation and common myths, and ensure you make informed decisions about vaccination.

Visit <https://ldh.la.gov/page/quiz> to select your quizzes and share this engaging resource with your patients.

Honoring our Black immunization heroes

February marks Black History Month in the United States, celebrating the remarkable contributions of Black individuals across various fields. In the realm of immunizations, Black pioneers have played pivotal roles, advancing public health despite facing systemic barriers.

Figures like [Dr. William Augustus Hinton](#), who developed a test for syphilis, and COVID-19 vaccine pioneer [Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett](#) have made significant breakthroughs, highlighting the invaluable role of Black scientists. Community leaders and activists have also championed equitable access to vaccines.

Black History Month offers a chance to honor their legacy and promote inclusivity in public health. Let's recognize and amplify the voices of these and other unsung heroes, who have been early and recent public health trailblazers.



Help your patients prepare for the Mardi Gras season

With Mardi Gras season underway, Louisianans are letting the good times roll with large parties, parades and other revelry. And, while what happens on the float stays on the float, the same can't be said of respiratory diseases that can easily spread during public gatherings. Respiratory illness numbers continue to trend downward but the risk of exposure still remains.



Reduce your risk of contracting a respiratory infection during Mardi Gras season with these precautions:

1. **Consider wearing a mask:** Masks provide an additional layer of protection against respiratory droplets containing viruses. Opt for well-fitted masks, preferably N95 or surgical masks, especially in crowded areas or indoor settings.
2. **Practice hand hygiene:** Regular handwashing with soap and water or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol helps reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. Remember to clean hands after touching frequently touched surfaces or objects.
3. **Maintain physical distance:** Try to maintain a safe distance of at least six feet from individuals outside your household, especially in crowded spaces or during parades and celebrations.
4. **Avoid crowded events:** Consider attending virtual or smaller gatherings instead of large, crowded events where the risk of exposure to respiratory viruses may be higher.
5. **Stay home if sick:** If you experience symptoms of a respiratory illness or suspect you may have been exposed to someone with a respiratory infection, stay home and avoid close contact with others. Monitor your symptoms and seek medical advice if necessary.

It's up to all of us to take responsibility for our respiratory health and consider the well-being of others during Mardi Gras festivities. Protect yourself and your krewe!

The latest on the flu

LDH updated its [Respiratory Virus Dashboard](#) displaying activity for three respiratory viruses: COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The dashboard is based on the weekly report (Week 4) developed by LDH's Infectious Disease Epidemiology section.

Both the report and the dashboard provide supplemental surveillance and historical data for the three conditions and non-influenza respiratory viruses. In addition, national influenza surveillance updates can be found at [CDC FluView Interactive](#).

Key Updates:

ILI: 5.7% ↓ *(above baseline)*

Flu Percent Positivity: 13.8% ↑

Flu Hospitalizations: ↓

Flu-associated Mortality: →

47 pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported in the U.S. this season; two of these deaths occurred in Louisiana.

RSV Season: OFF

By the numbers: Seasonal influenza activity remains elevated in most parts of the country.

- 10 influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported during Week 4, bringing the 2023-2024 season total to 57 pediatric deaths.
- In Louisiana, flu (influenza-like illness or ILI) activity has decreased to 5.7% but is above the regional baseline of 3.7.
- COVID-like illness (CLI) activity is low at 10%.
- Influenza percent positivity: 14%
- RSV percent positivity: 4%
- 47 pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported in the U.S. this season; two of these deaths occurred in Louisiana.

Download the full Week 4 report [here](#).

COVID-19 infections could cause respiratory issues in babies



A [Nature Communications study](#) revealed that babies born to mothers who had COVID-19 during pregnancy have notably high rates of respiratory distress at birth or shortly after. While previous research linked maternal COVID-19 to adverse outcomes for both mothers and newborns, this study highlights growing concerns about potential longer-term consequences for infants.

The virus may inflame a newborn's airway, leading to breathing difficulties, pale or blueish skin, nostril flaring, or chest retractions.

The risk of in utero transmission of COVID-19 from mother to baby remains low. In a Los Angeles study involving over 200 women with COVID-19, none of the newborns tested positive, but about 17% experienced respiratory issues, with affected infants staying in the hospital for an average of 24 days.

The timing of maternal COVID-19 infection during pregnancy did not affect the likelihood of infant respiratory distress. Vaccination played a significant role, as unvaccinated mothers had three times the odds of respiratory distress in their infants compared to those with at least one dose of the COVID vaccine. Maternal infection can trigger inflammation in both mother and infant, potentially leading to long-term consequences like asthma.

While not all pregnant mothers with COVID-19 will face negative outcomes for their babies, the [CDC confirms the safety of COVID vaccination during pregnancy](#), which helps build antibodies to protect both mother and baby from the virus.

[Read the full article from The Hill](#)

Viral outbreaks and why they happen

Tune in to [“Vax Matters” here](#) for an [informative discussion](#) that underscores the importance of vaccination in safeguarding public health and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

Dr. Catherine O’Neal, an associate professor of clinical medicine specializing in infectious diseases at the LSU Health Internal Medicine Residency in Baton Rouge, joins us to shed light on the dynamics of outbreaks and the pivotal role vaccines play in ending them.

Explore the history, causes and preventive measures against viral outbreaks. Gain insights into how we can navigate public health challenges, especially during festive seasons like Mardi Gras.

Click [here](#) to subscribe, like, comment and share your favorite episodes of “Vax Matters.”



ICYMI: Protection from respiratory viruses: Key steps for medical providers

Louisiana continues to grapple with elevated flu activity, particularly in northern regions and the greater New Orleans area, alongside rising COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) underscores these crucial measures for preventing illness and hospitalization:

1. Immunizations:

Immunization against flu, COVID-19 and RSV is paramount for all individuals ages 6 months and older. LDH recommends vaccinations to safeguard against hospitalizations, offer protection for long-



term health and reduce mortality. No-cost COVID-19 vaccines are accessible through CDC's [Bridge Access Program](#) for uninsured individuals or those with limited coverage.

2. **Treatments:** Effective treatments for flu and COVID-19 are available, significantly reducing severe illness, hospitalization and mortality. High-risk individuals, especially those ages 50 and above or with underlying medical conditions, should promptly seek medical advice for COVID-19 treatment within 5-7 days of symptom onset.
3. **Testing:** Rapid detection through tests, including home tests, is critical to prompt treatment and containment efforts. No-cost COVID-19 testing is accessible through CDC's [Increasing Community Access to Testing \(ICATT\)](#) program.
4. **Everyday prevention:** Beyond medical interventions, adherence to preventive measures such as staying home when sick, masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and improving indoor air quality are essential for added protection.

LDH provides comprehensive updates through its [Respiratory Virus Dashboard](#), detailing rates and cases of COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) for emergency department visits, laboratory tests, hospital admissions and mortality data.

Vaccination, prompt treatment, testing and everyday preventive actions are pivotal in mitigating the impact of respiratory viruses. Please continue to alert patients and others to these easy steps that can combat the spread of seasonal illnesses.

For more information, visit immunizations.la.gov.



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www.healthy.la.gov



Was IZ Newsletter Issue 135 informative?

Yes

No