

IMMUNIZATION Update

February 20 | 978 words | 5 -minute read



Question of the week

How does the prevalence of Long COVID vary across different U.S. states and territories, and what implications does this have for healthcare and public health policy and strategy?



Long COVID continues to impact millions of people, increasing healthcare needs in every U.S. state and territory. A [new report](#) shows that the percentage of U.S. adults in 2022 who reported experiencing Long COVID varied by U.S. state and territory, from 2% in the U.S. Virgin Islands to 11% in West Virginia.

The percentage tended to be lower in New England and the Pacific, and higher in the South, Midwest and West. Check the report to find data for your state. Clinicians and public health professionals should consider these data to inform health care and public health policy, strategy and action to reduce the impact of Long COVID.

Click [here](#) for details.

Respiratory virus update

According to the most recent respiratory virus surveillance report, flu-like illness in the state continues to be high. The full report is online and can be found [here](#).

In addition to the weekly surveillance report, LDH has developed a [Respiratory Virus Dashboard](#) that displays activity for the flu and two other respiratory viruses: COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The dashboard is based on the weekly report 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](#)

By the numbers:

- Nationally, seasonal influenza activity remains elevated with increases in some parts of the country. However, influenza activity has been mostly decreasing in LA after peaking at the end of December. Over the past week, emergency department visits for Influenza-like illness (ILI) in Louisiana **decreased slightly from 5.5% to 5.2%. This level of activity is still above the regional baseline of 3.7%.**
- 82 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported nationwide to the CDC so far this season (an increase of eight from the previous week); **two pediatric flu mortalities** have been reported in Louisiana this season.
- In Louisiana, flu (influenza-like illness or ILI) activity **has decreased to 6.2% but is above the regional baseline of 3.7%.**
- COVID-19 percent positivity in Louisiana from clinical laboratories remains **high but decreased from 13% to 11%** in the most recent week.
- COVID-19 weekly new hospital admissions **increased from 324 to 353** over the past week
- RSV percent positivity in Louisiana from clinical laboratories remained stable at **3%**.

Key Updates:

ILI: 5.2% (above baseline) →

Flu Percent Positivity: 9.3% ↓

Flu Hospitalizations: ↓

Flu-associated Mortality: ↓
82 pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported in the U.S. this season; two of these deaths occurred in Louisiana.

RSV Season: OFF

Research finds link between SARS-CoV-2 virus and heart attacks and strokes

COVID-19 is known to increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. However, it's not clear whether SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, also affects blood vessels directly.

To address this question, researchers with the National Institutes of Health conducted a study that **found that SARS-CoV-2, may increase the risk of heart attacks and stroke** by

infecting artery wall tissue, including associated macrophages. This provokes inflammation in atherosclerotic plaques, which could lead to heart attack or stroke.

The research team, led by Dr. Chiara Giannarelli at New York University School of Medicine, analyzed coronary artery tissue samples from eight people who died of COVID-19 between May 2020 and May 2021. Results appeared in *Nature Cardiovascular Research* on September 28, 2023.

The team found the following:

- SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA in coronary artery tissue from all patients.
- More viral RNA in the arterial walls than in the surrounding fat tissue.
- Many of the infected cells were macrophages, a type of white blood cell that ingests pathogens. Samples with more macrophages had more viral RNA.

Read the full report on the NIH website [here](#).



COVID-19 vaccination and boosting during pregnancy protects infants for six months



Women who receive an mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccination or booster during pregnancy can provide their infants with strong protection against symptomatic COVID-19 infection for at least six months after birth, according to a study from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health.

These findings, [published in *Pediatrics*](#), reinforce the importance of receiving both a COVID-19 vaccine and booster during pregnancy to ensure that infants are born with robust protection that lasts until they are old enough to be vaccinated.

See the full report [here](#)

Vaccine effectiveness and COVID-19



New data from the CDC show the updated (2023-2024) COVID-19 vaccines were effective against COVID-19, including against variants from both the XBB lineage and JN.1, a new variant that has become dominant in recent weeks.

To estimate the effectiveness of the updated COVID-19 vaccine, the CDC analyzed data from the Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) COVID-19 pharmacy testing program. The data was collected between September 2023 and January. The protection provided by the updated vaccine was compared to not receiving an updated vaccine, regardless of a person's infection history or the number of previous COVID-19 vaccines received.

Learn more [here](#).

Health equity through a rural lens – ECHO mini series

The Well-Ahead Louisiana Health Equity Action Team and the Louisiana Rural Health Association (LRHA) are collaborating on the Health Equity Through a Rural Lens – ECHO Miniseries. This series aims to improve healthcare access and reduce chronic disease burdens in rural Louisiana communities by addressing health equity concerns and social determinants of health (SDOH).

ECHO is an interdisciplinary, team-based approach to provide access to rural health care and experts in healthcare equity. Participants engage in case-based learning and receive brief presentations to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration.

The ECHO Miniseries welcomes physicians, advanced practice providers, clinical staff, community health workers (CHW) and rising professionals across Louisiana.

Join us for the virtual series on **February 21 from 12 noon to 1pm CST**.

For more information on this mini series [click here](#)

Health Equity Through a Rural Lens: Mini ECHO Series

The Health Equity Through a Rural Lens ECHO is a mini-series composed of 8 virtual learning sessions to identify, understand, and address the unintended health equity impacts on the citizens of rural Louisiana and their social determinants of health (SDOH). Its purpose is to reduce the burden of chronic disease and assure access to quality healthcare in our communities in a bi-directional "all-teach, all-learn" environment.

WELL-AHEAD 



ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS:

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS
ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS
PHARMACISTS
SOCIAL WORKERS
COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE WORKERS
&
RHC & FQHC PROVIDERS IN RURAL
AREAS ARE ESPECIALLY
ENCOURAGED TO JOIN!

SESSIONS HELD:
EVERY WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH
12 NOON-1 PM, CST
FEBRUARY 21, 2024 - APRIL 10, 2024

WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN?

TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPAND
TREATMENT CAPACITY IN URBAN AND
RURAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS LOUISIANA.

Contact Us:
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[LEARN MORE](#)
[CLICK HERE!](#)



ICYMI: 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 fields 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.



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Was IZ Newsletter Issue 137 informative?

Yes

No