Takeaway Points

1. Statewide influenza-like illness (ILI) is 6.28%, which represents a 7% increase as compared to last week.

2. There are eleven respiratory viruses currently circulating throughout Alabama. This illustrates that if a physician uses a respiratory panel during their initial patient assessment, they will likely find the causative agent for their patient’s illness.

3. If sick, stay at home until fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., Tylenol, Motrin, etc.) and wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Eleven respiratory viruses are known to be currently circulating throughout Alabama

*This is not the same type of coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Significant influenza activity has been detected in seven districts in Alabama

Six non-pediatric and no pediatric deaths have been reported this season

Statewide ILI is above the threshold of concern

Ten influenza or ILI outbreak(s) were reported during the week ending March 7

Notes:
* Information on outpatient visits to healthcare providers for ILI is collected through the U.S. Outpatient ILI Surveillance Network (ILINet). In Alabama, data are submitted using one of two methods: manual data entry by providers (ILINet) or electronic transmission by hospitals of syndromic surveillance data (ESSENCE).
** Geographic spread is determined based on district (not county) activity levels and virologic surveillance.
### Key Messages from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Key indicators that track flu activity remain elevated, but decreased for the third week in a row (5.3% ILI). Hospitalizations and deaths remain moderate to low overall, but hospitalization rates differ by age group, with high rates among children and young adults.

- Nationally, influenza A(H1N1) viruses are now the most commonly reported influenza viruses this season. Previously, influenza B/Victoria viruses predominated nationally.

- CDC estimates that so far this season there have been at least 34 million flu illnesses, 350,000 hospitalizations and 20,000 deaths from flu.

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm

### News from the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL)

- Over the last few weeks, the BCL has received some specimens for viral respiratory testing which were considered unsatisfactory for testing. For those healthcare providers submitting specimens to the BCL, make sure you are using the most recent guidance for collecting these types of specimens.
  - Website: https://go.usa.gov/xd5fg
  - Additional Questions: 1-334-260-3429

### How Can I Get Tested for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Over the last several days, there has been a lot of confusion surrounding who can test for COVID-19. On March 5, 2020, the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) announced they were able to test for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in-house. Although President Trump made an announcement that anyone who wanted to be tested could walk into a county health department and get tested, evaluation and testing is recommended to be conducted using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and in negative pressure rooms when available. Not only are these supplies limited at Alabama Department of Public Health’s (ADPH) county health departments (CHDs), but only a few have operational negative pressure rooms on-site. If community spread should occur in Alabama, ADPH has identified those CHDs with the necessary supplies and rooms and is prepared to shift all trained staff from non-critical functions to assist with COVID-19 related activities.

Patients who believe they may have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider to discuss their symptoms and next steps. Healthcare providers can reference the guidance posted on ADPH’s website (http://go.usa.gov/xdHWc) for the clinical criteria being used to guide evaluation of patients for COVID-19. The criteria pairs clinical presentation with specific epidemiologic exposures. If their patient does not meet the criteria outlined and they still wish to have them tested, they can contact the commercial laboratory where they normally refer specimens and see if they can perform SARS-CoV-2 testing.

### Resources

- ADPH’s Influenza Website: http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/influenza
- ADPH’s Seasonal Trend Graph: http://alabamapublichealth.gov/influenza/assets/ili_bclpositives.pdf