



DATE: March 7, 2025

TO: Hospitals, Laboratories, Emergency Medicine, Critical Care, Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Infectious Disease, Infection Control Practitioners, Urgent Care, Primary Care Providers, Director of Nursing, Local Health Departments

FROM: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), Bureau of Communicable Disease Control (BCDC)

**HEALTH ADVISORY: INFLUENZA-ASSOCIATED NEUROLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS
AND INFLUENZA-ASSOCIATED DEATHS IN PEDIATRIC POPULATIONS**

The purpose of this advisory is to alert clinicians to national reports of severe neurological complications of influenza infection in children and of influenza-associated pediatric deaths in New York State during the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season.

Summary

- In late January 2025, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received anecdotal reports of children with influenza-associated acute necrotizing encephalopathy (ANE), a rare and severe form of influenza-associated encephalopathy or encephalitis (IAE), including several fatal cases nationally.
- Nationally, influenza-associated pediatric deaths are reportable, and preliminary data for the 2024–25 season indicate that nine of 96 (9.3%) had influenza-associated encephalopathy.
- There is currently no national surveillance for influenza-associated encephalopathy or acute necrotizing encephalopathy, and it is not known whether reported cases are within or above expected ranges.
- Eighteen pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported to date in New York State during the 2024-2025 influenza season. Of these, 3 were ineligible for vaccination due to age, and the other 15 had no documentation of receipt of this season’s influenza vaccine. Evaluation is underway to determine whether there were signs of influenza-associated encephalopathy in these pediatric fatalities.
- In New York State, pediatric vaccination for seasonal influenza lags behind recommendations. For the current season, only 30% of New York children eligible to receive the influenza vaccine are vaccinated.

Recommended Actions

- Health care providers are asked to monitor hospitalized pediatric patients with influenza for neurologic symptoms or neurologic abnormalities. These include:
 - Diagnosis of encephalopathy or encephalitis
 - Neurologic signs or symptoms including but not limited to seizures, altered mental status, delirium, decreased level of consciousness, lethargy, hallucinations, or personality changes lasting >24 hours
 - Neuroimaging abnormalities including brain edema, brain inflammation, or brain lesions

- Electroencephalogram abnormalities
- Abnormal brain autopsy findings, if available, for children who died.
- Clinicians are encouraged to [order respiratory virus testing](#) in children presenting with new onset of neurological symptoms or neurologic abnormalities.
- Unless contraindicated, treat hospitalized pediatric patients with suspected seasonal influenza, especially those in an intensive care unit, with antiviral medication such as oseltamivir, without waiting for the results of influenza testing.
- Educate patients and parents of pediatric patients that [vaccines provide protection against influenza](#), including reducing the likelihood of severe disease and death if infection does occur.
- Promptly report pediatric patients with suspected influenza-associated encephalopathy and encephalitis, with or without acute necrotizing encephalopathy, to the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 or at BCDC@health.ny.gov or the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 866-692-3641 for NYC residents.
- Promptly report pediatric influenza-associated deaths to the [local health department](#) where the patient resides. If the residence is in New York City, report to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 866-692-3641.
- Submit to Wadsworth Center [all positive influenza samples from hospitalized patients requiring intensive care](#).
 - Information regarding influenza specimen collection and shipping to Wadsworth Center can be found at: <https://www.wadsworth.org/programs/id/virology/services/specimen-collection>.
 - For questions about shipping on holidays or weekends, please call 518-474-4177.
 - Please ship specimens to:
 - David Axelrod Institute
 - Virology Laboratory
 - Wadsworth Center
 - New York State Department of Health
 - 120 New Scotland Ave.
 - Albany, NY 12208

Resources and Questions

- CDC [MMWR Reports of Encephalopathy Among Children with Influenza-Associated Mortality — United States, 2010–11 Through 2024–25 Influenza Seasons](#)
- NYSDOH [Seasonal Influenza Information for Health Care Providers](#)
- NYSDOH [Health Advisory: Influenza, Surveillance and Reporting Requirements, 2024-2025](#) (PDF)
- CDC [Influenza Vaccine Administration and Coverage by Jurisdiction](#)
- NYSDOH [COVID and Influenza Vaccination Dashboard](#)
- NYSDOH/NYCDOHMH [Health Advisory: Accelerated Subtyping of Influenza A in Hospitalized Patients](#)
- CDC [Talking with Parents about Vaccines](#)
- Questions regarding vaccination can be directed to the NYSDOH Division of Vaccine Excellence at 518-473-4437 or by email at immunize@health.ny.gov.
- Questions regarding submission of specimens to Wadsworth Center can be directed to wcid@health.ny.gov.
- Questions pertaining to enrollment to Wadsworth Center CLIMS for access to remote ordering and access to electronic test reports can be directed to climsoutreach@health.ny.gov.
- General questions about influenza can be directed to the NYSDOH BCDC at 1-866-881-2809 evenings, weekends, and holidays or by email at BCDC@health.ny.gov.
- NYC based clinicians should contact the healthcare provider access line at 1-866-692-3641.
- General questions about influenza infection control in hospitals, nursing homes, and diagnostic and treatment centers can be sent to icp@health.ny.gov.