

Update on Seasonal Influenza

Union Health Ministry monitoring and tracking cases across States through the IDSP network on real-time basis

Cases of H3N2 subtype of Seasonal Influenza being strictly monitored

Advisories issued by ICMR on Precautions for Prevention

Cases of Seasonal Influenza expected to decline by March-end

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Union Health Ministry is keeping a close watch on the Seasonal Influenza situation in various States/UTs through the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) network on real-time basis. The Ministry is also tracking and keeping a close watch on morbidity and mortality due to the H3N2 subtype of the seasonal Influenza. Young children and old age persons with co-morbidities are the most vulnerable groups in context of seasonal influenza. So far, Karnataka and Haryana have confirmed one death each from H3N2 influenza.

Seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses which circulate in all parts of the world, and the cases are seen to increase during certain months globally. India every year witnesses two peaks of seasonal influenza: one from Jan to March and other in post monsoon season. The cases arising from seasonal influenza are expected to decline from March end. State surveillance officers are therefore fully geared to meet this public health challenge.

Real time surveillance through countrywide network of labs

A near real time surveillance of cases of Influenza like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) presenting in OPDs and IPDs of health facilities is undertaken by Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

- According to the latest data available on IDSP-IHIP (integrated health Information Platform), a total of

3038 laboratory confirmed cases of various subtypes of Influenza including H3N2 have been reported till 9th March 2023 by the States. This includes 1245 cases in January, 1307 in February and 486 cases in March (till 9th March).

- Further, the IDSP-IHIP data from health facilities indicate that during the month of January 2023, a total of 397,814 cases of Acute Respiratory Illness/Influenza Like Illness (ARI/ILI) were reported from the country that increased slightly to 436,523 during February, 2023. In the first 9 days of March 2023, this number stands at 133,412 cases.
- The corresponding data for admitted cases of severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) is 7041 cases in January 2023, 6919 during February 2023 and 1866 during the first 9 days of March 2023.

In 2023 (till 28th February), a total of 955 H1N1 cases have been reported. Majority of the H1N1 cases are reported from Tamil Nadu (545), Maharashtra (170), Gujarat (74), Kerala (42) and Punjab (28).

Influenza data from ICMR network of laboratories

In India, an integrated surveillance of Influenza like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) for the detection of human influenza virus and SARS-COV-2 virus is ongoing through structured ILI/SARI surveillance network of 28 sites. The surveillance network is comprised of 27 DHR-ICMR’s Virus Research & Diagnostic Laboratories and country’s National Influenza Centre (WHO-NIC) housed at ICMR-National Institute of Virology Pune, also a WHO Collaborating Centre for Global Influenza Surveillance & Response System (GISRS).

During the period of first 9 weeks (January 2nd to March 5th) of 2023, the surveillance network has monitored the human influenza virus and SARS-CoV-2 infection in SARI and ILI cases. The influenza typing results are summarized below:

Week	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
Influenza A H1N1pdm09	8	8	4	6	5	3	0	2	5
Influenza A H3N2	46	57	44	42	47	61	46	52	56
Influenza B Victoria	4	11	6	4	12	18	10	13	13

It can be seen that Influenza H3N2 is the predominant sub-type among the samples testing positive for influenza, since the beginning of this year.

Public Health Measures

Guidelines on seasonal Influenza: MOHFW has provided guidelines on categorization of patients, treatment protocol, and guidelines on Ventilatory management to the States/UTs which are also available on the website of the Ministry (www.mohfw.nic.in) and NCDC (ncdc.gov.in). MOHFW has also advised the State Governments for vaccination of health care workers dealing with H1N1 cases.

ICMR has also issued an advisory regarding this.

Influenza A subtype H3N2 is the major cause of current respiratory illness

- Pan respiratory virus surveillance has been established by ICMR/DHR across 30 VRDLs.
- Surveillance data from 15th December till date reflects the rise in number of cases of Influenza A H3N2.
- About half of all inpatient severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and outpatient influenza like illness were found to have Influenza A H3N2.
- Pan respiratory virus surveillance dashboard can be accessed at: https://influenza.icmr.org.in/public_dashboard

Clinical features of Influenza A H3N2

- This subtype appears to cause more hospitalizations than other influenza subtypes.
- Of hospitalized SARI patients with influenza A H3N2, about 92% presented with fever, 86% with cough, 27% with breathlessness, 18% with wheezing. Additionally, 16% had clinical signs of pneumonia and 6% had seizures.
- 10% of SARI patients who have H3N2 needed oxygen, and 7% required ICU care.

Do's and Don'ts for Infection prevention and control

Do's

- Wash hands with soap and water if symptomatic
- wear masks & avoid crowded places
- cover mouth & nose while sneezing & coughing
- take plenty of fluids
- avoid touching eyes and nose
- take Paracetamol for fever and bodyache

Don't's

- Shake hands or use other contact greetings
- Spit in public
- Take antibiotics or other medicines without consulting a doctor
- Eat together sitting close to others

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Drugs and Logistics

Oseltamivir is the drug recommended by WHO. The drug is made available through the Public Health System free of cost. Government has allowed sale of Oseltamivir under Schedule H1 of Drug and Cosmetic Act in February 2017 for wider accessibility and availability. Adequate logistics is available with the States. However, in case of any emergencies the Govt. of India has been providing the support to the States to tide over the crisis.

Additionally, NITI Aayog will hold an inter-ministerial meeting tomorrow, i.e., 11th March 2023 to review the Seasonal Influenza situation in the States and for ways to further support them in terms of public health measures, management guidelines and protocols to manage the increasing Seasonal Influenza cases.

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