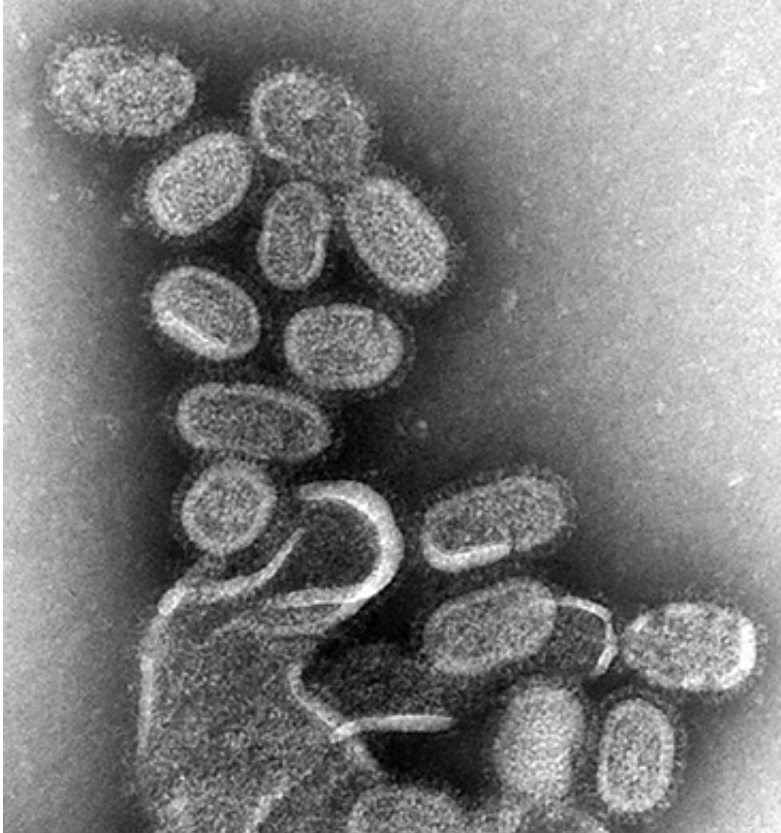


Seasonal influenza assessment for 2019

December 19 2019



Electron microscopy of influenza virus. Credit: CDC

The first virus detections for the 2019/2020 season indicate co-circulation of influenza types A (71%) and B (29%) viruses in the WHO European Region. This is a mix which potentially could result in high mortality in elderly patients and a heavy burden on healthcare services, warns the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC)

and World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe in a joint assessment issued today.

At this early stage of the European influenza season, there is no evidence of significant excess mortality. However, influenza virus of type A(H3N2) is typically associated with serious health impacts among those aged 60 and above as previously seen during A(H3N2) dominated seasons.

"Out of all [infectious diseases](#), seasonal influenza is the one associated with the highest mortality in Europe. We strongly encourage countries to continue focusing their vaccination efforts on the elderly and other eligible populations such as individuals with pre-existing heart- and lung disease," says Pasi Penttinen, Head of ECDC influenza and respiratory viruses disease programme.

The 2019/2020 influenza epidemic in the European Region started slightly early in week 47/2019 when the designated season threshold of 10% or more sentinel specimens across the region being influenza virus positive was crossed.

"It is too soon to predict how the season will develop in terms of peak week, severity and duration," says Pasi Penttinen. "However, it is likely that some countries will experience a peak in the middle of the holiday season when [healthcare services](#) are often reduced. The ability to manage a sudden influx of patients should therefore be reviewed in anticipation of likely increased patient flows in [emergency care](#) during the peak influenza weeks."

"Vaccination remains the single most effective measure for preventing influenza infection and development of severe disease among the frail and vulnerable," says Richard Pebody, Team Leader, High Threat Pathogens Infectious Hazard Management at WHO Regional Office for

Europe. "If the disease occurs, the timely administration of antivirals is recommended to mitigate severe outcomes in those most at risk."

Health care workers should be encouraged to receive vaccination against influenza to reduce the risk of infecting vulnerable groups in addition to protecting themselves. Non-pharmaceutical countermeasures against influenza, such as voluntary self-isolation of patients, hand washing, and respiratory hygiene should also be encouraged during the whole season.

The joint ECDC and WHO Europe report, "Influenza season 2019/2020: early situation assessment" aims to inform the decisions of national public health authorities and healthcare providers on interventions such as vaccination, antiviral drug use and infection prevention and control measures as well as allocation of appropriate healthcare resources.

More information: Influenza season 2019/2020: early situation assessment: www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-12-18/Influenza_season_2019_2020_early_situation_assessment.pdf

Provided by European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

Citation: Seasonal influenza assessment for 2019 (2019, December 19) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-12-seasonal-influenza.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.