

Now You Can Help With...

Influenza Sentinel Physician Surveillance

...In Only a Few Minutes a Week!

What is an influenza sentinel physician?

An influenza sentinel physician conducts surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) in collaboration with local and state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data provided by sentinel physicians are combined with other influenza surveillance data to provide a national picture of influenza virus and ILI activity in the U.S. Approximately 2200 physicians in 46 states were enrolled in this network during the 20004-2005 influenza season.

What data do sentinel physicians collect? How and to whom are they reported?

During influenza season (October through mid-May), sentinel physicians report the total number of patient visits each week and number of patient visits for influenza-like illness by age group (0-4 years, 5-24 years, 25-64 years, ≥ 65 years). These data are transmitted once a week to a central data repository at CDC via the Internet, a touch-tone telephone, or fax. Most physicians report that it takes them **less than 30 minutes a week** to compile and report their data. In addition, sentinel physicians can submit specimens from a subset of patients for virus isolation **free of charge**.

Who can be an Influenza Sentinel Physician?

Physicians of any specialty (e.g., family physicians, internists, pediatricians) in any type of practice (e.g., private practice, public health clinic, urgent care center, emergency room, student health center) are eligible to be influenza sentinel physicians.

Why Volunteer?

Influenza viruses are constantly evolving and cause substantial morbidity and mortality (approximately 36,000 deaths) almost every winter. The data sentinel physicians provide are critical for monitoring the impact of influenza and, when combined with other influenza surveillance data, can be used to guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care. Sentinel physicians receive feedback on the data submitted, summaries of regional and national influenza data, and a free subscription to CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report and Emerging Infectious Diseases journal. The most important consideration is that you provide critical public health help.

For more information on Influenza Sentinel Physician Surveillance, please contact Beth Nivin, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 212 442-9050 or bnivin@health.nyc.gov.

