Seasonal flu activity remains low in the United States.
- 3.4% of respiratory specimens tested in clinical laboratories were positive for influenza viruses.
- Influenza H3N2 viruses predominated this week.
- 1.5% of visits to a health care provider were for influenza-like illness, which is below the national baseline of 2.4%.
- 4.7% of deaths were attributed to pneumonia and influenza, which is below the epidemic threshold of 5.7%.
- No pediatric flu deaths were reported during week 41.
FDA expands Xofluza indication to people at high-risk for flu complications

Oct. 18, 2019; Medscape

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the indication for baloxavir marboxil tablets (Xofluza, Genentech) to include people at high risk of developing influenza-related complications.

The new indication regards patients with conditions such as asthma, chronic lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, or morbid obesity and for adults aged 65 years or older.

The FDA first approved baloxavir marboxil 1 year ago for the treatment of acute uncomplicated influenza in people aged 12 years or older who have been symptomatic for no more than 48 hours, as reported by Medscape Medical News.

Universal flu vaccine targets the stalk portion of the protein

Oct. 20, 2019; PrecisionVaccinations

A team led by researchers at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is getting closer to a universal flu vaccine using a novel approach they’ve developed called chimeric hemagglutinin (cHA).

In an October 17, 2019, press release, Icahn School of Medicine researchers, led by Peter Palese, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of Microbiology and Florian Krammer, Ph.D., Professor, said they ‘have focused their efforts on developing a ‘vaccine against the stalk portion of this protein.’

No, elderberry syrup will not prevent the flu

Oct. 17, 2019; Los Angeles Times

The leaves are changing. The wind comes with a faint chill. The back-to-school sale racks have been replaced by the Halloween spread.

This can only mean one thing: Another cold and flu season is upon us.

And with it, an onslaught of dubious claims about products that allegedly cut your risk of coming down with something. Lately, it seems like every single person with some combination of the words “wellness,” “natural” or “herbal” in their Instagram bio has been touting elderberry products — various tinctures from juices and syrups to gummies and teas — as a safe, natural way to ward off a cold or the flu.

An updated guide to the changing science of flu shots

Oct. 14, 2019; STAT
Flu shot season is upon us.

Three years ago, STAT laid out some of the questions surrounding flu vaccination in an article you can find here. Lots of flu vaccine studies have been published in the interval — clearing up some of the questions we raised, adding to the confusion with others.

Given that a lot of you are either about to roll up a sleeve or are debating whether you should, we decided to revisit the issues we explored previously, based on new information. We’ll also raise a few more questions percolating in the world of influenza science.

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**Nation’s top health organizations band together to urge patients to get flu vaccinations to prevent serious health risks**

Oct. 15, 2019; American Lung Association

For the first time, the American Lung Association, the American Diabetes Association (ADA), and the American Heart Association (AHA) have come together to raise an important alert about the dangers of influenza (flu) for people with chronic health conditions, including diabetes, heart disease and lung diseases such as asthma and COPD. With this year’s flu season just beginning, together three of the nation’s leading, non-profit health organizations are urging the 117 million adults living with chronic disease to prioritize annual flu vaccination and calling on health care professionals to advocate for and support flu immunization within their practices.

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**Routine influenza vaccination for all adults hospitalized with pneumonia may save lives and reduce hospitalizations**

Oct. 14, 2019; PRNewswire

Among adults admitted to a hospital with pneumonia, patients who received an influenza vaccination had a lower chance of being readmitted, according to Kam Sing Ho, MD, from Mount Sinai St. Luke's and Mount Sinai West, New York City, who will present the study findings at the CHEST Annual Meeting 2019 in New Orleans.

The co-occurrence of influenza and pneumonia has been well established, accounting to up to half of deaths during seasonal influenza in the United States. Although the beneficial effects of influenza vaccination are well described, vaccination is often regarded as a primary care service.
#FluShotSelfie Social Media Campaign
Join us in our #FluShotSelfie campaign on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to show others how we protect ourselves and others with an annual flu vaccine! Simply use the hashtag and feel free to tag us!

Flu Champion Program
FFF recently launched its Flu Champion program, which aims to mobilize and support people at the community level in flu awareness and education efforts. As part of this program, FFF has developed four different advocacy toolkits for schools, healthcare professionals, employers and community organizations, and general advocates. Interested in becoming a Flu Champion yourself? Reach out to us at contact@familiesfightingflu.org.