

# Department of Disease Control

## Weekly Disease Forecast No.197\_Influenza (10 - 16 February 2019)

From the national disease surveillance system, the Department of Disease Control (DDC) reveals that this year up to the present there were 21,572 influenza patients of which 1 died. The highest influenza incidence rates (1 per 100,000 population) were found in the Northern region and in provinces including Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Phayao, Lampang and Surat Thani respectively.

Close monitoring of the disease situation has shown that influenza outbreaks occurred mostly in crowded places. Most of the outbreaks occurred in schools (22 out of 32), the Northern region (12), and Chiang Mai (8).



According to this week disease forecast, the occurrence of influenza is likely to continue due to the weather variability. It is also noted with concern that influenza cases of January is higher than last year and the median of the past five years of the same period.

Influenza, or flu, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. The viruses are mainly spread person to person by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Influenza may also spread when people share eating or drinking utensils as well as when they touch surfaces with infected droplets and then touch their mouth, eyes, or nose. People with influenza-like illness (ILI), i.e. fever, sore throat, cough, stuffy or runny nose and muscle aches, therefore should be absent for home care, avoid close contact to and sharing utensils with others to prevent spreading of influenza viruses. They should wear face masks, or cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, and wash hands often. Patients with severe illness or those who take medicines to relieve influenza illness but symptoms do not improve within 2 - 3 days, a hospital medical care is immediately needed.

During the flu season (rainy and cold seasons), the DDC encourages crowded places such as schools and prisons, to run screenings for influenza. If there are many people with ILI, public health officers should be consulted of how to stop the outbreak. Frequent cleansing of sharing spaces especially touching surfaces such as door knobs that might be contaminated with the viruses is helpful. Hand-washing facilities with soap or alcohol hand sanitizer, and face masks should be provided.

The Department of Disease Control advises people at risk of having severe influenza illness to get the annual influenza vaccine to protect them from the disease and to reduce the disease severity. The at risk groups include pregnant women, people older than 65 years, people with underlying chronic diseases such as COPD, asthma, diabetes, heart, kidney, and liver diseases, Thalassemia, people with impaired immunity, young children under 2 years old, and obese people.

For queries or additional information, please call DDC hotline 1422.

