

# Department of Disease Control Weekly Disease Forecast No.199\_Influenza (24 February – 2 March 2019)

From the national disease surveillance system, the Department of Disease Control (DDC) reveals that this year up to the present there were 46,648 influenza patients of which 4 died. The number of influenza cases this year is higher than the same period of last year and twice higher than the median of the past 5 years.

The close monitoring of the disease situation since the beginning of 2019 had found more influenza clusters (31) compared to last year. The clusters were mostly occurred in crowded places such as schools, prisons, military camps and hospitals.



According to this week disease forecast, the occurrence of influenza is likely to continue due to the weather variability, especially in the northern region of the country.

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. During the flu season, the DDC encourages crowded places such as schools and prisons, to run screenings for people with influenza-like illness (ILI), i.e. fever, sore throat, cough, stuffy or runny nose, and muscle aches. The people with ILI 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.

The DDC 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 young children under 2 years old, pregnant women, people older than 65 years, people with underlying chronic diseases such as COPD, asthma, diabetes, heart, kidney, and liver diseases, Thalassemia, and people with impaired immunity.

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

