

Why is BPHC tracking influenza cases in Boston?

- To study current distribution and trends in influenza cases, as well as make predictions on what the next influenza season might look like. With this information, we can distribute information on influenza, set up vaccination clinics, conduct neighborhood outreach for areas that have a disproportionate number of cases, educate the public about influenza prevention methods, and look for specific demographic and location outbreaks or potential outbreaks

How does BPHC gather these data?

- All influenza case information and ILI-related ED visit information comes from MAVEN (Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network), a case depository system that is run by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Hospitals, clinics, and clinicians can all enter information into MAVEN.

What does ILI mean?

- ILI stands for influenza-like illness.

What is the difference between confirmed influenza cases and influenza-like illness?

- A confirmed influenza case means a clinical sample tested positive for viral influenza RNA or nucleic acids in a clinical specimen via Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) molecular assay or viral culture.
- An [influenza-like illness](#) is defined as fever, cough, and/or sore throat. While these symptoms can be associated with diseases other than influenza, ILI statistics are used internationally for influenza surveillance.

Why report influenza-like illness? Why not only report confirmed cases?

- We report on influenza-like illness and not only confirmed cases because it is a leading indicator of influenza cases. That information can be used to predict the number and distribution of cases in the future. This makes it a useful metric in influenza reporting

Many people who have ILI symptoms aren't tested for influenza. How does this dashboard account for this?

- The dashboard cannot account for cases in which a person was not tested for influenza and a diagnosis of influenza has not been made. Only cases wherein the person was tested for influenza will be available on the dashboard

Why does this data matter to me and my community?

- The Boston Public Health Commission and the Mayor's office may use the information presented in this dashboard for policy decisions such as masking. Other institutions such as hospitals and clinics may use this information to adjust practice policies and to monitor hospitalization trends. Finally, this information can be helpful for Boston residents to decide when to take more precautions to prevent infection.

How will results be shared with the public?

- The dashboard is updated every Wednesday, with data that is current through the previous Saturday.

How are neighborhoods abbreviated?

- Neighborhoods are abbreviated as follows:
 - Mattapan (MT), 02126
 - Dorchester (DOR), 02121, 02125
 - Dorchester (DOR), 02122, 02124
 - South End (SE), 02111, 02118
 - Roxbury (RX), 02119, 02120
 - East Boston (EB), 02128
 - Jamaica Plain (JP), 02130
 - Allston/Brighton (AB), 02134, 02135, 02163
 - Hyde Park (HP), 02136
 - Back Bay, Downtown, Beacon Hill, North End, West End (BB/DT/BH/NE/WE), 02108-02110, 02113-02114, 02116, 02199
 - South Boston (SB), 02127, 02210
 - Roslindale (RS), 02131
 - Charlestown (CH), 02129

Where can I go if I have questions?

- Send questions to info@bphc.org