

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Manisha Juthani, MD
Commissioner



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Governor
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To: Clinicians, Laboratorians, Local Health Departments
From: Lynn Sosa, MD, Director of Infectious Diseases and State Epidemiologist
Date: February 25, 2025
RE: Neurological Complications in Pediatric Influenza Patients

Nationally, a possible increase in children with neurological complications of influenza has been reported. Typically, influenza in healthy children presents as an acute, self-limited infection with symptoms including fever, cough, malaise, myalgia, sore throat, nasal congestion, and nausea. Reported neurological complications of influenza are rare, but may occur in otherwise healthy children, including those without previous neurological conditions. Commonly reported neurological complications are seizure, encephalitis, and encephalopathy. Although less common, severe complications include acute necrotizing encephalopathy (ANE), meningitis, myelitis and secondary bacterial meningitis, and brain abscesses. Serious health outcomes may include hospitalization, ICU admission, permanent disability, and death.

The reasons for this possible increase is not known. This may represent a true increase in neurological complications for reasons that are not yet understood or the high level of circulating influenza during the 2024-25 season might have caused a proportional increase in the number of reported neurological complications. The Connecticut Department of Public Health seeks to better understand this reported increase in neurological complication in pediatric influenza patients and requests the following:

- Clinicians are encouraged to test for influenza in patients <18 years of age presenting with symptoms consistent with influenza and new onset neurological symptoms. Specific neurological criteria include:
 1. Diagnosis of encephalopathy or encephalitis
 2. Neurologic signs or symptoms including but not limited to seizures, altered mental status, delirium, decreased level of consciousness, lethargy, hallucinations, or personality changes lasting >24 hours
 3. Neuroimaging abnormalities such as brain edema, brain inflammation, or brain lesions
 4. Electroencephalogram abnormalities
 5. Abnormal brain autopsy findings, if available, for children who died
- Please report patients < 18 years of age with new onset neurological symptoms and positive influenza testing within 10 days to the Epidemiology and Emerging Infections Program at (860)509-7994 during normal business hours or (860)509-8000 evenings and weekends. Please report any cases that have occurred since October 1, 2024 and new diagnosed cases.
- Please submit influenza specimens from these patients to the State Public Health Laboratory for confirmation and subtyping.

Questions may be directed to the Epidemiology and Emerging Infections Program at (860)509-7994 during normal business hours or (860)509-8000 evenings and weekends.



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