



Flu Activity Picks Up Nationwide and Should We Fast Before We Measure Our Lipids?

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Each month, Dr. Nahum Kovalski reviews a handful of abstracts from, or relevant to, urgent care practices and practitioners. For the full reports, go to the source cited under each title.

Flu Activity Picks Up Nationwide

Key point: CDC recommends vaccination and antiviral treatment against influenza

Citation: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/flu-activity-picks-up.htm>. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD).

Influenza activity was continuing to increase in the United States and most of the country was experiencing high levels of influenza-like-illness (ILI), according to CDC's January 4 FluView report. "Reports of influenza-like-illness (ILI) are nearing what have been peak levels during moderately severe seasons," according to Dr. Joe Bresee. CDC continues to recommend influenza vaccination and antiviral treatment when appropriate at this time.

"While we can't say for certain how severe this season will be, we can say that a lot of people are getting sick with influenza and we are getting reports of severe illness and hospitalizations," says Bresee, who is Chief of the Epidemiology and Prevention Branch in CDC's Influenza Division. "Anyone who has not already been vaccinated should do so now," Bresee says. "And it's important to remember that people who have severe influenza illness, or who are at high risk of serious influenza-related complications, should get treated with influenza antiviral medications if they get flu symptoms regardless of whether or not they got vaccinated. Also, you don't need to wait for a positive laboratory test to start taking antivirals."



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CDC tracks influenza activity year-round and publishes a report weekly on Fridays. According to this surveillance, the proportion of people seeing their health care provider for ILI in the United States had been elevated for four consecutive weeks prior to the January 4 report, climbing sharply from 2.8% to 5.6% during that time. Last season, which was relatively mild, ILI peaked at 2.2%. Comparatively, during 1998-1999 and 2003-2004, which were moderately severe seasons, ILI peaked at 7.6%. During 2007-2008, another moderately severe season, ILI peaked at 6.0%. During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, ILI peaked at 7.7%. ■

Should We Fast Before We Measure Our Lipids?

Key point: No Need to Fast Before Lipid Measurements.

Citation: Gaziano JM. Should we fast before we measure our lipids? *Arch Intern Med.* November 12, 2012. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.1771.

Researchers in Canada used laboratory data to measure variations in lipid measurements according to the time since a patient's last meal (range, 1-16 hours). Nearly 210,000 individuals were included.

Overall, mean total and HDL cholesterol levels varied little, by less than 2%, with differing fasting times. LDL and triglyceride levels varied more, by less than 10% and 20%, respectively.

An editorialist concludes: "The incremental gain in information of a fasting profile is exceedingly small for total and HDL cholesterol values and likely does not offset the logistic impositions placed on our patients, the laboratories, and our ability to provide timely counseling to our patients. This, in my opinion, tips the balance toward relying on nonfasting lipid profiles as the preferred practice." ■