

# Public Health Points

York City Bureau of Health

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## Influenza Season 2013-2014 – Progress Report

Data at the local, state and national levels are showing that the current flu season has reached its peak and is now on the decline. It would be premature, however, to say this flu season is now about over since flu season generally runs into mid-March or early April each year. In addition, the tail end of each flu season usually includes an increase in Influenza B cases compared to Influenza A cases, which hasn't been apparent yet here in York.

Although the current flu season is not yet over, it is not too early to make some accurate statements about this flu season compared to recent past flu seasons. First, from our local perspective here in York, our flu season began at its usual time (early December – between the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas) and is peaking and beginning its decline in mid-February as it usually does.

Second, the predominate Influenza strain circulating this season has been Influenza A/pH1N1, the same strain or fairly similar strain as the pandemic Influenza A/H1N1 strain that caused havoc in 2009. This strain now, as it did back then, has caused severe respiratory illness in particular among young to middle-aged adults (ages 19 through 64), compared to older adults, although severe illness has been seen in all age groups. Numerous A/pH1N1 hospitalizations, many requiring intensive care unit (ICU) admission, have occurred, and deaths statewide and nationally have been reported in this age group that doesn't generally experience such severe consequences from the flu.

Third, the circulating strains of flu (both the A strains and the B strains) closely match those in this season's vaccines, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). One of the leading risk factors for catching the flu this season is not getting the flu vaccine earlier this season or before this season got underway.

One final word of caution – although the current flu season is beginning its decline, there is still at least another four weeks of flu season remaining. There will be, as there has many times in the past, a likely up-tick in Influenza B cases in the final phase of this flu season. (This pattern of A strain first then B strain later is one explanation why some people are unfortunate enough to get flu twice in one season.) It is not too late to get the flu vaccine if someone hasn't had it yet. And plenty of flu vaccine remains available at doctors' office, pharmacies, and public health clinics. Influenza is a vaccine-preventable disease.

To track the final phase of this flu season, check the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

## Aiming for a healthier weight? York City Weight Watchers Program may be able to help!

The York City Weight Watchers Program offers partially subsidized memberships to low-income York City residents thanks to a Healthy Communities Grant from Weight Watchers International and the US Conference of Mayors. The initiative gives adults the tools, knowledge and support to reach a healthier weight and so they, in turn, can teach their children and families healthy behaviors.



The York program is holding ongoing registrations through September for city residents who are 18 years or older, have a Body Mass Index of 27 or greater, and meet federal poverty guidelines. For more details, contact Melanie Quigley at the York City Bureau of Health at [mquigley@yorkcity.org](mailto:mquigley@yorkcity.org) or call 849-2340 for registration, meeting times, and locations.

## Reportable Conditions 2014 York, PA

Reported Cases	2014	Cum.
Animal Bites	5	5
Chlamydia	37	37
Gonorrhea	19	19
Hepatitis C	7	7
Influenza Type A	28	28
Influenza Type B	1	1
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection	22	22
<b>Total Case Reports</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>119</b>

### Didn't Get a Flu Shot Yet?

City residents who are uninsured or underinsured can still get their flu vaccine at the Health Center by calling 815-0910 to make an appointment.

# March Is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

The best way to prevent colorectal cancer is to get screened regularly starting at age 50. There are often no signs or symptoms of colorectal cancer – that’s why it’s so important to get screened. Here are some interesting facts about colorectal cancer and how screening for colorectal cancer can save lives.

- Of cancers affecting both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States.
- Colorectal cancer affects all racial and ethnic groups and is most often found in people ages 50 years of age and older.
- In the U.S. every year there are nearly 150,000 new cases of colorectal cancer diagnosed and there are nearly 50,000 deaths from colorectal cancer.
- Screening is recommended for men and women beginning at age 50.
- Colorectal cancer often can be prevented. Screening helps find precancerous polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.
- Screening helps find colorectal cancer early, when treatment can be most effective.
- You may be at increased risk for colorectal cancer if a close relative has had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer, if you have inflammatory bowel disease, or if you have certain genetic syndromes. If you think you are at increased risk, ask your doctor at what age and how often you should be screened.
- Recommended screening tests for colorectal cancer may include: Colonoscopy (once every 10 years), high-sensitivity Fecal Occult Blood Test, also known as a Stool Test (once a year), and Flexible Sigmoidoscopy with or without a Barium Enema X-ray (once every 5 years).
- Benefits and risks of these screening methods vary. Discuss with your doctor which test is best for you. And check with your insurance provider to find out which tests are covered by your insurance plan, and how much you will have to pay.
- Getting screened could save your life!

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