What we know about COVID-19 and influenza

THE LATEST ON THE COVID-19 GLOBAL SITUATION & READINESS FOR INFLUENZA DURING THE PANDEMIC
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Current global situation
As of 09 November 2020, 10:00AM CEST

• Nearly 49 million cases
  • 5 countries with highest cumulative number of cases
    - United States of America
    - India
    - Brazil
    - Russian Federation
    - France

• > 1.2 million deaths
  • 5 countries with highest cumulative number of deaths
    - United States of America
    - Brazil
    - India
    - Mexico
    - The United Kingdom
COVID-19 cases reported in the last 7 days
Per million population

FROM 02 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00AM CEST to 08 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00 AM CEST
COVID-19 deaths reported in the last 7 days
Per million population

FROM 02 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00AM CEST to 08 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00 AM CEST
Readiness for influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic

• Different respiratory viruses co-circulate, including seasonal influenza and are responsible for many acute infections and influenza-like illnesses

• Each year, seasonal influenza affects individuals in every country and results in up to one billion cases, three to five million severe cases, and up to 650,000 respiratory-related deaths worldwide

• Countries should be prepared and ensure optimal management of influenza during COVID-19.

Actions to ensure readiness include:

1. **Plan** for influenza with adaptations
2. **Prevent**
   - Vaccination
   - Personal measures
3. **Care**
   - Clinical management
   - Antivirals
4. **Test & monitor**
   - Surveillance
   - Multiplex testing
5. **Communicate**
   - Regular communication
   - Engage with public

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1. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5935243/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5935243/)
Planning for your influenza season

• The Southern Hemisphere has already experienced its influenza season this year (May to September 2020), providing insights which may be useful to the Northern Hemisphere.

• A significant reduction in seasonal influenza cases compared to previous years was observed in the Southern Hemisphere.

• This may be due to restrictions put in place for COVID-19. **Appropriate planning is important and may include:**
  - Public health and social measures for COVID-19 and influenza

![Southern hemisphere: number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype](image)

Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/flunet), GISRS

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Preventing seasonal influenza during a COVID-19 pandemic
How to prevent seasonal influenza

Administer a safe influenza vaccine every year to prevent severe disease in risk groups\(^1\)

Ensure individual measures are implemented\(^2\)

1. WHO SAGE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Certain risk groups for severe disease are identified as priority groups for influenza vaccination

- The following populations are identified for priority use of the influenza vaccine to prevent severe disease\(^1\):
  - Young children
  - Pregnant women
  - Older persons
  - Persons with underlying health conditions
  - Health workers

- During COVID-19 and if supplies are limited, health workers and older persons should be considered as the highest priority risk groups for influenza vaccination\(^2\)

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1. [https://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf?ua=1)
2. [WHO SAGE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic](https://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf?ua=1)
### Population groups with increased risk for severe disease

**Seasonal influenza**
- Young children (<59 months)
- Older persons (>65 years old)
- Pregnant women
- Persons with chronic conditions
  - cardiac conditions (hypertension & cardiovascular disease)
  - chronic lung conditions (asthma or COPD)
  - endocrine disorders (diabetes)
  - neurological disorders (stroke & neurodevelopmental conditions)
  - chronic kidney disease
  - metabolic disorders
  - hematologic disorders
  - chronic liver disease and other immunosuppressed conditions, including cancer & HIV/AIDS
  - chronic conditions requiring immunosuppressive therapy, such as chronic steroid treatment or chemotherapy
- Obese persons

**COVID-19**
- Older persons
- Persons with chronic conditions
  - cardiac conditions (hypertension & cardiovascular disease)
  - chronic neurological disorders, including stroke, chronic lung disease (e.g., COPD)
  - diabetes
  - chronic kidney disease
  - some immunosuppressed conditions (e.g., cancer)
- Obese persons
- Persons who smoke

Considerations to prevent infections of seasonal influenza in the context of COVID-19

Continue to promote personal measures to prevent transmission of both influenza and COVID-19

Begin planning procurement of influenza vaccines for the upcoming influenza season

Maintain routine influenza vaccination programmes

Consider prioritization of risk groups where vaccine supply is limited
Clinical pathway for patients presenting with influenza-like symptoms

**SCREENING & TRIAGE**
- Persons presented to health facilities should be evaluated for influenza-like symptoms
- If symptoms are present, infection prevention control measures should be put in place

**CLINICAL ASSESSMENT**
- Patient with suspected influenza should be evaluated for presence of risk factors for severe disease and complications such as severe pneumonia or exacerbation of chronic disease

**TREATMENT**
- Patients presenting with severe disease and those at risk for severe disease (regardless of disease severity) should be treated with antivirals regardless of testing capacity as soon as possible

**TESTING**
- Patients with severe or complicated disease or those with risk factors (regardless of severity) should be tested with rapid molecular assays. After results are obtained, treatment can be modified
Clinical pathway of at risk patients with suspected influenza

Patients with influenza-like symptoms

Patients belonging to high risk group for severe influenza

Start antiviral treatment and Test for influenza

If test is negative, treatment may be modified depending on severity of disease

If test is positive, continue antiviral treatment

If needed, add supportive treatment such as oxygen or ventilation
Considerations to prepare for clinical management of patients with influenza in the context of COVID-19

**Training**
Train health workers and laboratory personnel on clinical management and infection, prevention and control measures.

Identify surge staff; including clinicians, nurses, respiratory technicians, etc.

**Structural**
Ensure facilities are ready to surge care areas to manage severe and critically ill patients including screening areas, emergency areas, and intensive care.

Include planning for maintaining essential health services.

**Supply**
Ensure sufficient supplies of diagnostics, personnel protective equipment, antivirals and oxygen and other essential medicines and advanced respiratory support devices to provide critical care.

**System/referral**
Ensure that integrated screening and referral systems for both COVID-19 and influenza are in place for rapid diagnosis, prevention of transmission and treatment.

Set up clear care pathways at all levels of health systems.
TEST & MONITOR

How to differentiate between influenza and COVID-19

- Both influenza and COVID-19 are respiratory diseases with similar modes of transmission.
- The two infections often have similar symptoms, with the exception of loss of taste and smell; which seems more specific to COVID-19.
- Only testing can differentiate between influenza and COVID-19.

People of all ages who experience severe symptoms such as:
- fever and/or cough associated with difficulty breathing,
- shortness of breath,
- chest pain or pressure, or
- loss of speech or movement
should seek medical care immediately.
WHO & global influenza surveillance

- The Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) is used to conduct global influenza surveillance\(^1\).
- Since COVID-19 emerged, GISRS has supported the response through the detection of COVID-19 cases\(^2,3,4\) in addition to other COVID-19 surveillance and control activities\(^5\).
- National Influenza Centres (NICs) should remain vigilant for novel influenza viruses with pandemic potential and seasonal influenza virus variants.

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1. Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System
2. Preparing GISRS for the upcoming influenza seasons during the COVID-19 pandemic – practical considerations
4. Operational considerations for COVID-19 surveillance using GISRS
Considerations to ensure continued monitoring & surveillance of influenza in the context of COVID-19

- **Monitor**
  - Maintain routine sentinel surveillance of diseases caused by respiratory pathogens, such as influenza

- **Monitor**
  - Maintain timely and routine reporting of influenza data to global or regional platforms

- **Monitor**
  - Continue COVID-19 surveillance strategies and ensure samples for influenza testing are sent to National Influenza Centres (NICs)

- **Test**
  - Prioritize sampling and testing and use multiplex testing for influenza and COVID-19 in sentinel surveillance sites, where possible
Transparent communication & infodemic management

• Develop and adapt communication materials to inform individuals of the differences and similarities between influenza and COVID-19, how to protect themselves and when to seek care

• Timely, regular and transparent communication is important to build trust within communities

• Mis- and dis-information is often rapidly spread through social media. Several techniques can be employed to manage the infodemic:
  
  ➢ **Employ social listening methods** (e.g., community feedback, frequently asked questions from healthcare systems and hotlines, and social media rumour tracking) to shape timely and tested health information
  
  ➢ **Engage communities** to address pandemic fatigue
  
  ➢ **Use trusted sources** to disseminate and amplify messaging
Considerations on how to communicate and to engage with the public

1. **Have a communication plan ready** to accompany influenza vaccination programmes during COVID-19.

2. **Communicate regularly and transparently** on the situation and on social and safety measures.

3. **Develop and adapt communication materials** to inform about the differences and similarities between influenza and COVID-19; how to protect themselves; as well as when and where to seek care.

4. **Employ social listening methods** such as community feedback and social media rumour tracking. **Recommend trusted sources** to disseminate and amplify messaging.
WHO resources on influenza during COVID-19

- **Readiness for influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic**
  The policy brief provides a concise summary of information and considerations to ensure optimal management of influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Operational considerations for COVID-19 surveillance using GISRS**
  This document is intended for Ministry of Health and other government officials responsible for COVID-19 and influenza surveillance and summarizes the operational considerations for leveraging influenza surveillance systems to incorporate COVID-19 testing.

- **Preparing GISRS for the upcoming influenza seasons during the COVID-19 pandemic – practical considerations**

- **Public health surveillance for COVID-19: interim guidance**
  An interim guidance.

- **Overview of Public Health and Social Measures in the context of COVID-19**
  The document is intended to inform national and local health authorities and other decision-makers at all levels.

- **Vaccines against influenza**
  This position paper is concerned mainly with vaccines and vaccination against seasonal (epidemic) influenza.

- **WHO SAGE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic**
  Interim recommendations from the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization for influenza vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  [https://www.who.int/immunization/policy/position_papers/Interim_SAGE_influenza_vaccination_recommendations.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/immunization/policy/position_papers/Interim_SAGE_influenza_vaccination_recommendations.pdf?ua=1)

- **Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System**
  [https://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/en/](https://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/en/)
How to protect ourselves & others
9 important COVID-19 prevention measures

01 Stay home and self-isolate if you feel unwell, even with mild symptoms
02 Clean hands frequently with soap & water for 40 seconds or with alcohol-based hand rub
03 Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze
04 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
05 Maintain a minimum physical distance of at least 1 metre from others
06 Stay away from crowds and avoid poorly ventilated indoor spaces
07 Use a fabric mask where physical distancing of at least 1 metre is not possible
08 Use a medical / surgical mask if you may be at higher risk (age, medical conditions)
09 Regularly clean & disinfect frequently touched surfaces
WHO guidance on COVID-19

VIDEO RESOURCES

Masks

Medical and fabric masks: who wears what when?

How to wear a fabric mask safely

How to wear a fabric mask

How to wear a medical mask

Transmission

How to break the chains of transmission

Protecting ourselves

How to protect yourself against COVID-19

Seven steps to prevent the spread of the virus
Call for poster submissions

Third WHO Conference on Infodemic Management – A whole-of-society approach

30 Nov – 11 Dec 2020

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:
20 November 2020

Submit your digital poster about country experience in mitigating the COVID-19 infodemic.

Selected posters will be accepted and summarized as part of the conference proceedings.

Sharing your country’s experience in infodemic management can help improve other countries’ strategies.
