

It's Never Too Late to Join the Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance Network

For over a decade the Texas Department of Health (TDH) has had an active influenza surveillance system in place to obtain cultures from sites throughout Texas. The purpose of this surveillance system is three-fold: to confirm influenza diagnoses, to collect data that enable public health officials to assess the severity of the annual epidemic, and to obtain information early in the season as to what strains are circulating. This information is important to ascertain whether or not the current season's vaccine will most likely protect against the culture-confirmed influenza strains identified in this state.

Each surveillance site is provided with culture media and guidelines for utilization. These sites set up the active surveillance protocols for their jurisdiction. Physicians and public health clinics are encouraged to report all suspected influenza cases, obtain the culture media and guidelines from the main surveillance site, and submit cultures to the Texas Department of Health Bureau of Laboratories. Some cultures processed at TDH are then sent on to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for further typing. See Table 1 on Page 2 for a list of current primary influenza surveillance sites in Texas, with contact information.

Participating sentinel sites report influenza-like illness (ILI) to CDC on a weekly basis. The reports include the number of patients with ILI, in age groups 0-4, 5-24, 25-64, and >65, as well as the total number of patients seen for any reason that week. The reporting process takes about 10 minutes a week and reports are entered at the Web site or called in by telephone.

In collaboration with The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the TDH Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Program is currently recruiting health care providers in family practice, general practice and pediatrics to participate in the Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance Network Program.

The advantages of participation are as follows:

- Recognition in *Disease Prevention News*
- A complimentary subscription to CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report and Emerging Infectious Disease Journal for participating physicians
- A CDC certificate of participation for sites submitting at least 50% of the weekly reports for the current influenza reporting period

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Those interested in participating in this important public health activity should contact Irene Brown in the [TDH IDEAS Division](#) at (512) 456-7676, ext. 6878; irene.brown@tdh.state.tx.us. IDEAS will provide participants with a CDC instruction packet and a CDC-issued identification code required for entering ILI data. In addition to entering and viewing their own data, participating surveillance sites will also have access to the most recent national and regional CDC influenza surveillance data provided online.

Table 1. Primary Active Influenza Surveillance Sites in Texas

City of Amarillo Department of Public Health	Drue Koehler	806/351-7228
Lubbock City Health Department	Kevin McClaren	806/775-2946
Wichita Falls/Wichita County Health District	Lori Morrow	940/761-7800
Tarrant County Health Department	Bobby Jones	817/871-7361
Dallas County Health District	Kathy Hankins	214/819-2037
TDH Public Health Region 4/5 North	Debbie Evans	903/533-3585
University of Texas Health Services	Angelique Brunt	512/475-8245
Capital Pediatrics (Austin)	Jolene Frank	512/454-4545 x220
Galveston County Health Department	Chuck Chambers	409/765-2514
Corpus Christi/Nueces County Health District	Sandra Heagherley	361/851-7214
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District	Jerry Werling	210/207-2085
City of Laredo Health Department	Ricardo Martinez	956/795-4934
El Paso City/County Health District	Pilar Provencio	915/543-3504



Prepared by Irene Brown, TDH IDEAS.

CDC Select Agent Program

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is required to regulate the possession of biological agents and toxins that have the potential to pose a severe threat to public health and safety. The CDC Select Agent Program oversees these activities. The Select Agent Program currently requires registration of facilities including government agencies, universities, research institutions, and commercial entities.

The Program's Web site, www.cdc.gov/od/sap/, provides application packages, current regulations regarding select agents and access additional resource information. If you still have questions or concerns after reviewing the material contained in this website, please contact our program via email at lsat@cdc.gov, phone at 404-498-2255 or fax at 404-498-2265.

(Materials on this site last updated: February 27, 2003.)

New Rabies Vaccination Frequency Adopted

The Texas Board of Health today approved rules that will permit dogs and cats to be vaccinated against rabies every three years instead of annually. Under the new requirements, dogs and cats should be vaccinated at 4 months of age, receive a booster vaccination 12 months later and every three years thereafter. Pet owners and their veterinarians may choose more frequent vaccinations.

TDH officials emphasize that the change from annual to triennial does not lessen the importance of having pets vaccinated against rabies. The new statewide rules become effective March 1. For further information on rabies and other zoonoses, visit the TDH Zoonosis Division Web site: www.tdh.state.tx.us/zoonosis/.

Safety Alerts Web Site

[Safety Alerts](#) is a Web site that offers timely e-mail notification of safety related product recall information on both food and drugs as well as mechanical products such as toys and home appliances. Users can obtain alerts by type of product, date of recall, or list of the Top Ten (selected on the basis of unit volume, hazard level, and potential for continued availability of product). This site also offers news articles on general food, drug, and product safety issues. There are no fees for any of the services.

Safety Alerts also offers an electronic subscription service. E-mails are sent once daily for only the new alerts that match the subscriber's specifications. (Ave: 3 notifications per week in 1999) Each e-mail contains a short summary for each of the new alerts, accompanied by a hyperlink to the full article. Site articles contain information such as brand names, lot numbers or codes, potential severity, and contact information on each recall.

Selected Recalls Listed on the Safety Alerts Web Site

1. [Hunt's Tomato Sauce®](#)
2. [Murray® riding lawn tractors](#)
3. [Spectrum Ketoprofen®](#)
4. [Carter® infant jumpsuits](#)
5. [Navajo Manufacturing Motrin IB and DayQuil Liquicaps®](#)
6. [York Pharmaceuticals® aspirin tablets](#) (under many retail names)
7. [Burger King® and Alcone® kids meal toys](#)
8. [Whirlpool® microwave/vent hood combinations](#)
9. [Zapper toys](#) (manufactured by 8 different firms)
10. [Purdue Pharmaceuticals OxyContin®](#)



Disease Prevention News (DPN)
Texas Department of Health
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, TX 78756-3199

Phone: (512) 458-7677
Fax: (512) 458-7340
E-mail: dpn@tdh.state.tx.us

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