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Increased influenza activity in Spain from mid-December 2004

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Influenza activity was low in Spain between October and early December 2004, but has risen sharply since mid-December. The incidence of influenza-like illness rose above the baseline level of activity in week 51/2004 (19-25 December) and widespread activity has been reported since week 52/2004.

The current level of clinical influenza activity in Spain exceeds the maximum incidence reported in the past seven seasons (Figure), and rose to 540 per 100 000 population in week 2/2005, with a particular increase in this week in the 5-14 year age group. Current surveillance indicators suggest that influenza activity for the season has not yet peaked.

During this season, collaborating laboratories in influenza surveillance tested 792 sentinel respiratory specimens for influenza viruses; 286 (36%) were positive. The percentage of sentinel samples positive for influenza has increased steadily from 3% positive in week 47/2004 to 57% positive in the week 01/2005. The total number of sentinel and non-sentinel influenza virus isolates in the laboratories has been 320 (315 influenza A and 5 influenza B). A total of 179 influenza A viruses were subtyped (176 were H3 and 3 were H1). Six influenza viruses AH3 have been antigenically and/or genetically characterised and all were A/Wellington/1/2004 (H3N2)-like.

Figure. Clinical and virological sentinel monitoring of influenza in Spain, 1997-2005 seasons.

