

History of Influenza Pandemics and New Strains

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| 1918 | <p>Pandemic <i>"Spanish flu" H1N1</i></p> <p>The most devastating flu pandemic in recent history, killing more than 500,000 people in the United States, and 20 million to 50 million people worldwide.</p> |
| 1957-58 | <p>Pandemic <i>"Asian flu" H2N2</i></p> <p>First identified in China, this virus caused roughly 70,000 deaths in the United States during the 1957-58 season. Because this strain has not circulated in humans since 1968, no one under 30 years old has immunity to this strain.</p> |
| 1968-69 | <p>Pandemic <i>"Hong Kong flu" H3N2</i></p> <p>First detected in Hong Kong, this virus caused roughly 34,000 deaths in the United States during the 1968-69 season. H3N2 viruses still circulate today.</p> |
| 1977 | <p>Appearance of a new influenza strain in humans <i>"Russian flu" H1N1</i></p> <p>Isolated in northern China, this virus was similar to the virus that spread before 1957. For this reason, individuals born before 1957 were generally protected, however children and young adults born after that year were not because they had no prior immunity.</p> |
| 1997 | <p>Appearance of a new influenza strain in humans <i>H5N1</i></p> <p>The first time an influenza virus was found to be transmitted directly from birds to people, with infections linked to exposure to poultry markets. Eighteen people in Hong Kong were hospitalized, six of whom died.</p> |
| 1999 | <p>Appearance of a new influenza strain in humans <i>H9N2</i></p> <p>Appeared for the first time in humans. It caused illness in two children in Hong Kong, with poultry being the probable source.</p> |
| 2002 | <p>Appearance of a new influenza strain in humans <i>H7N2</i></p> <p>Evidence of infection is found in one person in Virginia following a poultry outbreak.</p> |
| 2003 | <p>Appearance of a new influenza strain in humans <i>H5N1</i></p> <p>Caused two Hong Kong family members to be hospitalized after a visit to China, killing one of them, a 33-year-old man. (A third family member died while in China of an undiagnosed respiratory illness.)</p> <p><i>H7N7</i></p> <p>In the first reported cases of this strain in humans, 89 people in the Netherlands, most of whom were poultry workers, became ill with eye infections or flu-like symptoms. A veterinarian who visited one of the affected poultry farms died.</p> <p><i>H7N2</i></p> <p>Caused a person to be hospitalized in New York.</p> <p><i>H9N2</i></p> <p>Caused illness in one child in Hong Kong.</p> |

2004

Appearance of a new influenza strain in humans

H5N1

Caused illness in 47 people in Thailand and Vietnam, 34 of whom died. Researchers are especially concerned because this flu strain, which is quite deadly, is becoming endemic in Asia.

H7N3

Is reported for the first time in humans. The strain caused illness in two poultry workers in Canada.

H10N7

Is reported for the first time in humans. It caused illness in two infants in Egypt. One child's father is a poultry merchant.

2005

H5N1

The first case of human infection with H5N1 arises in Cambodia in February. By May, WHO reports 4 Cambodian cases, all fatal. Indonesia reports its first case, which is fatal, in July. Over the next three months, 7 cases of laboratory-confirmed H5N1 infection in Indonesia, and 4 deaths, occur.

On November 1, WHO reports a cumulative total of 122 laboratory-confirmed cases of H5N1 infection worldwide, with 62 deaths, since January 2004. Human infections have been detected in four Asian countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

-From the World Health Organization (WHO), December 30, 2005