

Epi Monthly

March 2024 Vol 25, Issue 3

Public Health LOOK OUT!

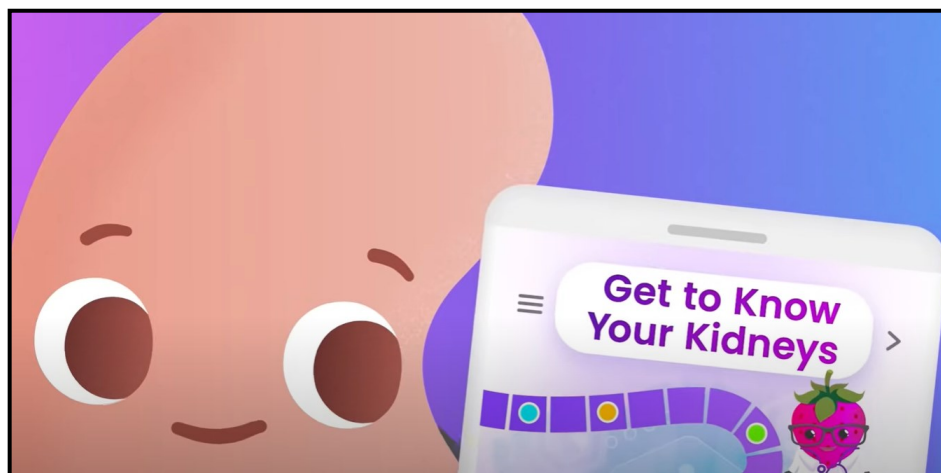
Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County

- National Minority Health Month** is observed in April to raise awareness on the importance of improving the health of racial and ethnic minority groups and reducing health disparities. This year's theme is "*Be the Source for Better Health*", encouraging us all to contribute to the improvement of health outcomes through our cultures, communities, and connections. The goal of this month is to shed light on the disproportionate burden of premature death and illness among minorities and encourage action through health education, early detection, and control of diseases. Visit [HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov) to learn more.
- National Public Health Week (NPHW)** is being celebrated **April 1-7th**. This year's theme is "Protecting, Connecting, and Thriving: We Are All Public Health" emphasizing that we all have a responsibility to improve our health and the health of our communities. Daily themes this week place emphasis on Civic Engagement, Healthy Neighborhoods, Climate Change, New Tools and Innovations, Reproductive and Sexual Health, Emergency Preparedness, and the Future of Public Health. Learn more at [nphw.org](https://www.nphw.org).
- National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW)** is observed yearly to highlight the importance of protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases! This year, NIIW is April 22-29th. Infants are especially vulnerable to infections as their immune systems are immature and developing. Vaccinating children on-time ensures they develop the most efficient immune protection against potentially life-threatening diseases. View [2024 Recommended Immunizations for Birth Through 6 Years Old](https://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/zoonotic/diseases/niiw/).

For the most recent information on COVID-19 in Florida please visit: <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/>

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Click the image to the left to watch the video.

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Background

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacteria *treponema pallidum*.¹ The disease occurs in four stages and can be treated with antibiotics. Infectious syphilis refers to the primary and secondary stage where disease transmission occurs. Syphilis can be difficult to diagnose since symptoms overlap with other diseases and can be mild and go unnoticed. Without treatment, syphilis will remain in the body even though there are no signs and symptoms and progress to latent syphilis, which can last years. Thus, regular testing and prompt diagnosis and treatment is essential to prevent disease transmission and long-term health issues for those infected.

Clinical Presentation

Syphilis occurs in four stages: primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary.¹ Primary syphilis can be identified by one or more sores in or around the genitals, anus, rectum, or mouth. These sores, called chancres, can be firm, round, and painless and can heal with or without treatment in three to six weeks. However, the infection will progress to the secondary stage if the person with syphilis does not receive treatment. Secondary syphilis presents with a skin rash and sores in the genitals, mouth, or anus. The rash is usually not itchy, is located on the hands, feet, or other body parts, and may be faint or appear similar to rashes caused by different diseases. The secondary stage can also include symptoms such as: swollen lymph nodes, fever, sore throat, hair loss, headaches, or fatigue. Symptoms from secondary syphilis can resolve with or without treatment. However, without treatment, secondary syphilis will progress to latent stage syphilis. In latent stage syphilis, no visible signs or symptoms occur but the disease remains in the body. Lastly, in tertiary syphilis, the disease is severe and can affect multiple organ systems and even lead to death. Tertiary syphilis is uncommon and occurs 10 to 30 years after the development of primary stage syphilis. At any stage of syphilis infection, the disease can spread to the nervous, visual, or auditory system and cause damage.¹

Transmission

Syphilis is transmitted through direct contact with a syphilis sore.¹ These sores can be found in and around the genitals, anus, rectum, and mouth. Transmission can occur during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Incubation can last from 10 to 90 days with an average incubation period of 21 days. When a pregnant person has syphilis, the infection can spread to their unborn baby. A baby born alive with syphilis may not have any signs or symptoms of disease. However, if treatment is not immediate, the baby may develop serious problems within a few weeks.

Diagnosis

Blood tests are usually used to test for syphilis, although fluid from syphilis sores can also be tested.² Healthcare providers may suggest routine testing for individuals who are pregnant, males who have sex with males, those with HIV, and those who take PrEP to prevent HIV.¹ In addition, individuals with symptoms or a positive partner should be tested.

Treatment

Syphilis is curable with the proper antibiotics. Benzathine penicillin G is a long-acting antibiotic used to cure syphilis during the early stages, including primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis.³ A single injection of this antibiotic can cure syphilis during these stages. A three-dose regimen is recommended at weekly intervals to treat syphilis in the late latent stage or when duration of infection is unknown. It is important to note that individuals treated for this infection should abstain from sexual contact until sores have completely healed.³

Methods

Reported infectious syphilis cases were obtained from Florida Health Charts by demographic characteristics in Miami-Dade County and Florida from 01/01/2018 to 12/31/2022. The incidence rates were calculated per 100,000 population using population estimates from Florida Health Charts.

Results

Infectious syphilis cases and incidence increased each year during the five-year period in both Miami-Dade County and Florida (Figure 1). From 2018 to 2022, the incidence rate of new infections increased 39% in Miami-Dade County and 50% in Florida, respectively. Miami-Dade County experienced a peak increase in cases in 2022 with 746 new cases (27.0 infections / 100,000 population), which accounted for 16% of all Florida infectious syphilis cases in 2022.

Age

Infectious syphilis cases and incidence rates stratified by age group followed a similar trend in both Miami-Dade and Florida, with cases and incidence rates rising from ages 15-24, peaking at ages 25-34, and then decreasing until ages 75-84 (Figure 2). In Miami-Dade County, most cases occurred between ages 15 to 64, few cases were reported for ages 65 and older, and no cases were reported under age 14. (Figure 3). Reported cases in both the 15-24 and 45-54 age groups remained consistent across all five years. The largest increase of reported cases occurred among the age group 25-34 years during the five years, with a 48% increase between 2018 and 2022.

Gender

The majority of reported cases occurred in males in Miami-Dade and Florida, with males comprising 91% and 85% of total cases in Miami-Dade County and Florida, respectively. Incidence rate among males was about 11 times higher than females in Miami-Dade County, while incidence rate was about 5 times higher among males compared to females in Florida. Between 2018 and 2022, the largest increase in cases occurred among males in Miami-Dade County and Florida. (Figure 4 & 5).

Figure 1.

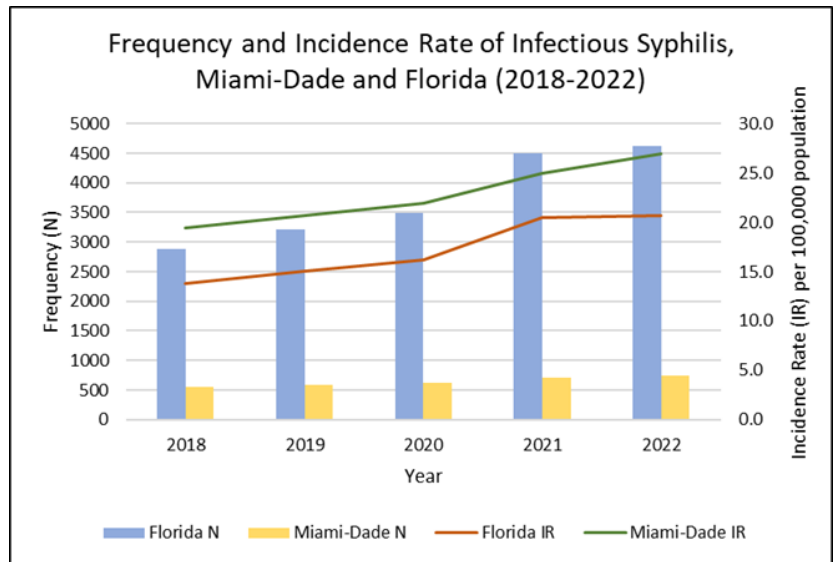


Figure 2.

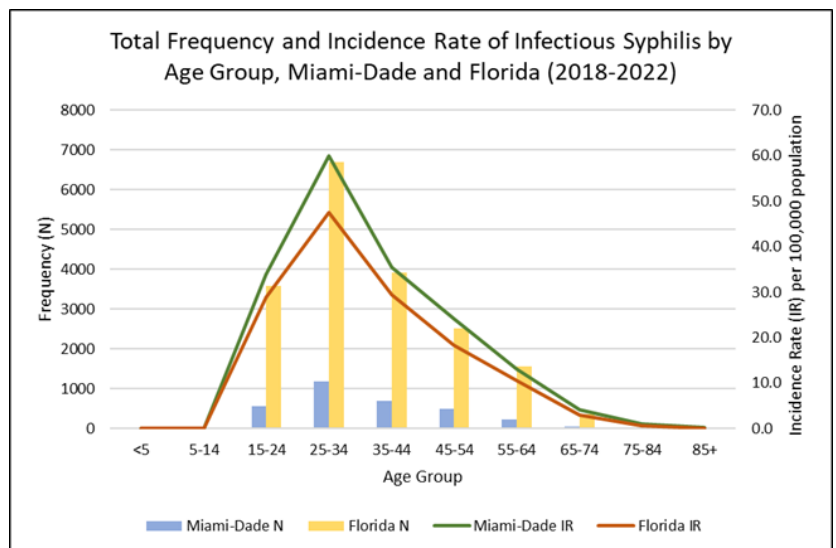
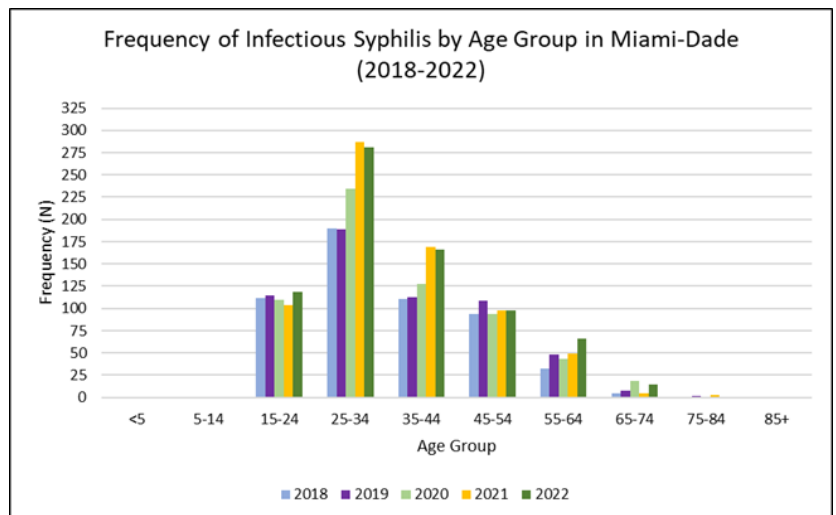


Figure 3.



Race and Ethnicity

From 2018 to 2022, the Hispanic population in Miami-Dade had the highest number of reported cases, followed by the Non-Hispanic Black and Non-Hispanic White populations. However, incidence rates were highest among Non-Hispanic Blacks, followed by Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites (Figure 6). Reported cases steadily increased among Hispanics during the five-year period. Reported cases among Non-Hispanic Blacks remained consistent throughout the five years.

Discussion

In Miami-Dade, Florida, and the United States, infectious syphilis cases and incidence continue to increase.⁴ Despite preventative public health efforts and treatment programs, the largest number of syphilis cases since 1950 was recorded for the United States in 2022.^{4,5} Both locally and nationally, the age group of 25 to 34 experienced the highest burden of infectious syphilis, and males experienced higher infections than females.⁶ The rising number of syphilis cases reported in *women heightens* concern for congenital syphilis.⁵ Congenital syphilis can lead to severe health problems and even death in infants. Similar to national rates, Non-Hispanic Blacks in Miami-Dade experienced the highest incidence of infectious syphilis. While the highest number of reported cases was seen in the Hispanic population in Miami-Dade, this can be attributed to the demographics of the county. Nationally, rates of infectious syphilis are increasing across all demographic groups, but health disparities exist among men who have sex with men, young adults, and the Non-Hispanic Black population.⁴ Health disparities in these populations cannot be explained solely by differences in individual behaviors but are also based on factors including differences in social networks and access to quality sexual health care. This overview of syphilis cases in Miami-Dade from 2018 to 2022 is limited given that 2020 data needs to be interpreted cautiously in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Disruptions in routine healthcare and public health services, loss of STI prevention resources, and reduced STI screening may have led to less syphilis cases being diagnosed and treated and increased disease transmission in 2020.⁷

Figure 4.

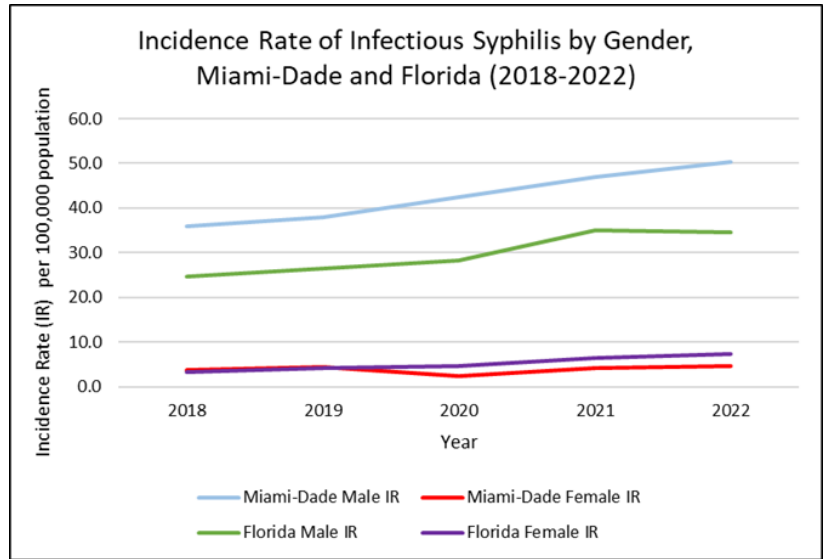


Figure 5.

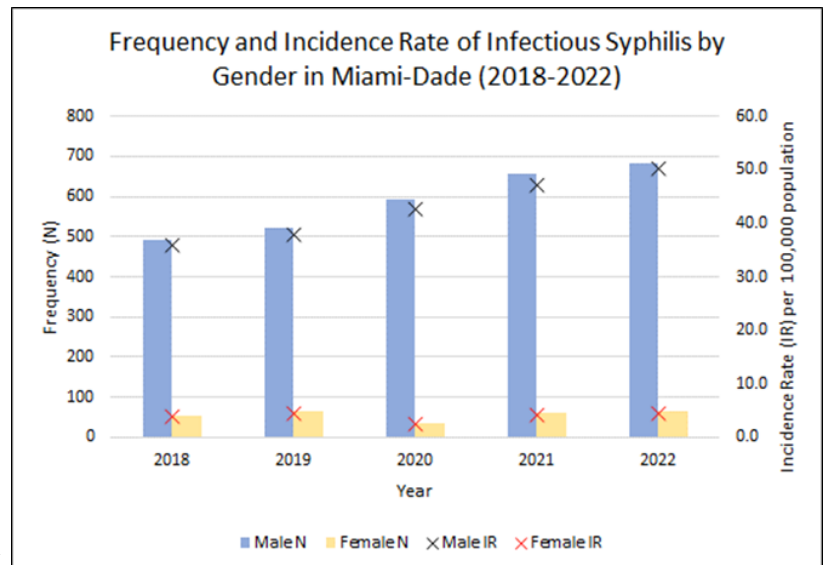
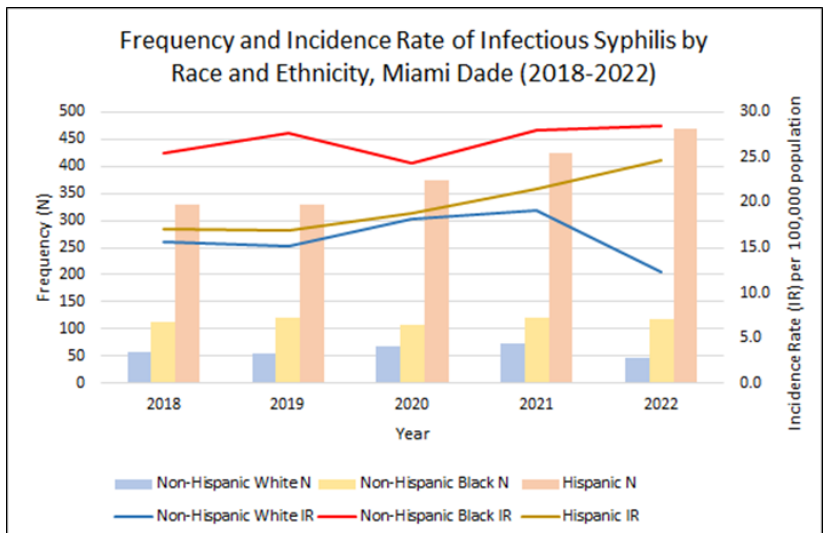


Figure 6.



Prevention

Because syphilis is transmitted via contact with a syphilis sore in the genital, anus, rectum or mouth regions, the only way to avoid contracting syphilis is by abstaining from vaginal, oral, and anal sex.⁸ Using a condom correctly during sexual contact reduces the risk of transmitting or contracting syphilis, but transmission may occur with sores that are not covered by the condom. Being in a mutually monogamous relationship with someone who does not have the infection will reduce the risk of exposure. It is essential for individuals who have syphilis to notify their sexual partners of their risk so timely testing and treatment can occur, and further transmission is prevented.

THE LOWDOWN ON HOW TO PREVENT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Practice Abstinence
The surest way to avoid STDs is to not have sex.
This means not having vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

Have Fewer Partners
Agree to only have sex with one person who agrees to only have sex with you.
Make sure you both get tested to know for sure that neither of you has an STD. This is one of the most reliable ways to avoid STDs.

Talk With Your Partner
Talk with your sex partner(s) about STDs and staying safe before having sex.
Let's both get tested together!
Why take a chance when we can know for sure?
It might be uncomfortable to start the conversation, but protecting your health is your responsibility.

Use Condoms
Using a condom correctly every time you have sex can help you avoid STDs.
Condoms lessen the risk of infection for all STDs. You still can get certain STD infections, like herpes or HPV, from contact with your partner's skin even when using a condom.
Most people say they used a condom the first time they ever had sex, but when asked about the last four weeks, less than a quarter said they used a condom every time.

Get Vaccinated
The most common STD can be prevented by a vaccine.
The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and can help you avoid HPV-related health problems like genital warts and some cancers.
Who should get the HPV vaccine?
All boys and girls ages 11 to 12, but the vaccine can start at age 9.
Everyone through age 18 years, if not vaccinated already.

Get Tested
Many STDs don't have symptoms, but they can still cause health problems.
Talk with your health care provider. Search for CDC recommended tests. Find a location to get tested for STDs.
The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to get tested.

The Good News
STDs ARE preventable. There are steps you can take to keep yourself and your partner(s) healthy.
Here's How You Can Avoid Giving or Getting an STD:

If You Test Positive...
Getting an STD is not the end! Many STDs are curable and all are treatable.
If either you or your partner is infected with an STD that can be cured, both of you need to start treatment immediately to avoid getting re-infected.

View Infographic Online at: www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/lowdown/

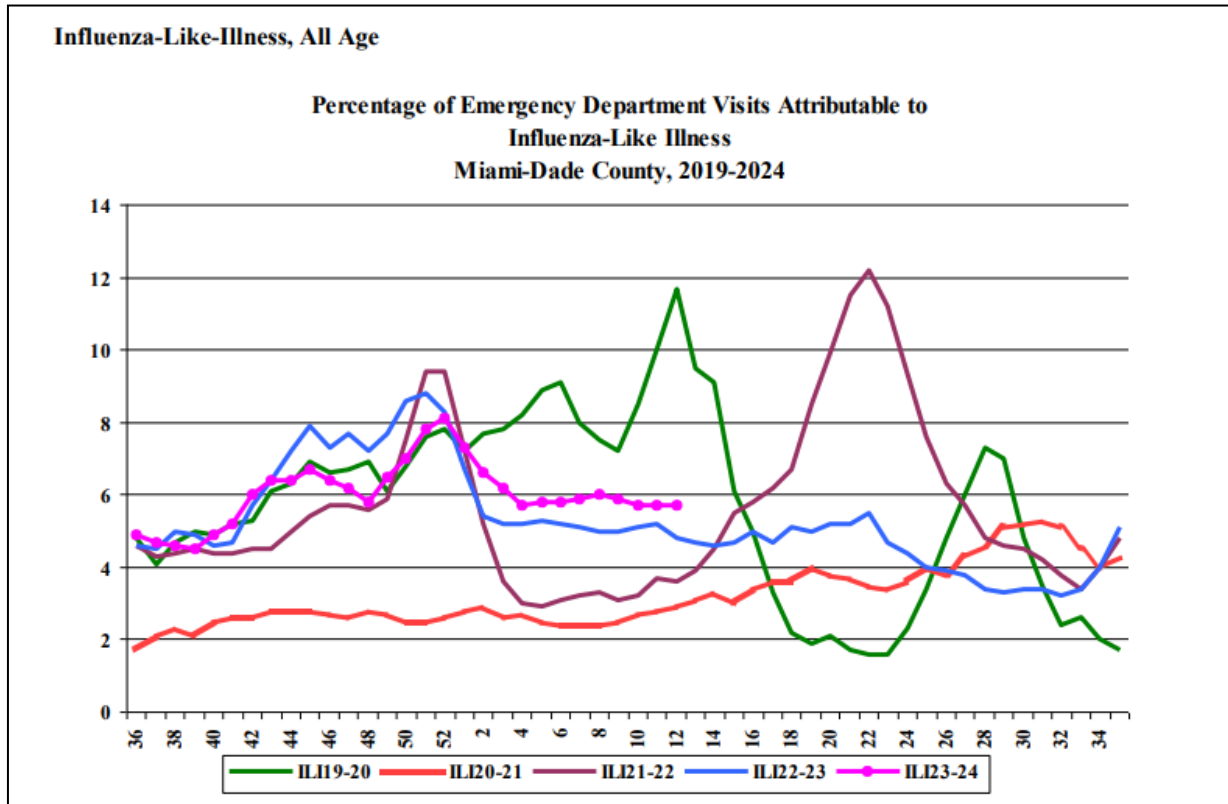
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Epidemiology, Disease Control and Immunization Services

Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County

On a daily basis, all of Miami-Dade County's emergency department (ED) hospitals electronically transmit ED data to the Florida Department of Health. This data is then categorized into 11 distinct syndromes. The influenza-like illness (ILI) syndrome consists of fever with either cough or sore throat. It can also include a chief complaint of "flu" or "ILI". This season's 2023-2024 data is compared to the previous 4 influenza seasons (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023).



There were 37,204 ED visits; among them 2,132 (5.7%) were due to ILI. During the same week last year, 4.8% of ED visits were ILI.

PARTICIPATE IN INFLUENZA SENTINEL PROVIDER SURVEILLANCE Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County NEEDS Influenza Sentinel Providers!

Sentinel providers are key to the success of the Florida Department of Health's Influenza Surveillance System. Data reported by sentinel providers gives a picture of the influenza virus and ILI activity in the U.S. and Florida which can be used to guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care.

- Providers of any specialty, in any type of practice, are eligible to be sentinel providers.
- Most providers report that it takes **less than 30 minutes a week** to compile and report data on the total number of patients seen and the number of patients seen with influenza-like illness.
- Sentinel providers can submit specimens from a subset of patients to the state laboratory for virus isolation **free of charge**.

For more information, please contact
Yoselin Rodriguez at 305-470-5660.



Miami-Dade County Monthly Report Select Reportable Disease/Conditions February 2024

Diseases/Conditions	2024 Current Month	2024 Year to Date	2023 Year to Date	2022 Year to Date
HIV/AIDS				
AIDS*	26	59	62	59
HIV	113	211	306	324
STD				
Infectious Syphilis*	54	94	112	95
Chlamydia*	1201	2408	2218	2155
Gonorrhea*	517	1124	1028	836
TB				
Tuberculosis**	6	11	19	22
Epidemiology, Disease Control & Immunization Services				
Epidemiology				
Campylobacteriosis	50	87	83	68
Ciguatera Poisoning	1	1	0	0
Cryptosporidiosis	9	16	14	5
Cyclosporiasis	1	1	2	0
Dengue Fever	13	39	24	2
Escherichia coli, Shiga Toxin-Producing	21	31	27	23
Encephalitis, West Nile Virus	0	0	0	0
Giardiasis, Acute	27	37	33	25
Influenza, Pediatric Death	1	1	1	0
Legionellosis	5	7	7	3
Leptospirosis	0	0	0	0
Listeriosis	1	2	0	1
Lyme disease	1	1	0	0
Malaria	2	2	0	0
Meningitis (except aseptic)	2	2	0	0
Meningococcal Disease	0	0	0	1
Salmonella serotype Typhi (Typhoid Fever)	1	1	0	0
Salmonellosis	75	138	117	72
Shigellosis	16	28	33	15
S. Pneumoniae, invasive disease	8	17	28	6
Vibriosis	4	5	1	2
West Nile Fever	0	0	0	0
Zika Virus (non-congenital)	0	0	0	0
Immunization Preventable Diseases				
Measles	0	0	0	0
Mumps	0	0	0	2
Pertussis	2	2	0	1
Rubella	0	0	0	0
Tetanus	0	0	0	0
Varicella	3	5	4	3
Hepatitis				
Hepatitis A	3	3	3	2
Hepatitis B (Acute)	6	9	22	9
Healthy Homes				
Lead Poisoning	70	128	56	31

*Data is provisional at the county level and is subject to edit checks by state and federal agencies.

** Data on tuberculosis are provisional at the county level.

Data on EDC-IS includes Confirmed and Probable cases.

For more information access: [The Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County Reportable Disease Handbook](#)



OASH Office on Women's Health

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Prevention and Testing at Every Age. Care and Treatment at Every Stage.

Ending the HIV Epidemic
READY SET PREP

What's New at DOH-Miami-Dade!

- DOH-Miami-Dade provides FREE [vaccines](#) for children 0 to 18 years of age. Keeping up with child vaccination [schedules](#) and ensuring your children are up-to-date with their vaccines will help protect them and prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. [Visit](#) to find a clinic near you. Appointment line: 786-845-0550
- Visit floridahealth.gov to learn the ABC's of Safe Sleep and reduce risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)!

To report disease and for information, call EDC-IS at:

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program	305-470-6877
Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance	305-470-5660
Hepatitis Program	305-470-5536
HIV/AIDS Program	305-470-6999
Immunization Services	305-470-5660
STD Program	305-575-5430
Tuberculosis Program	305-575-5415
Appointment Line	786-845-0550



National Poison Prevention Week | March 17-23, 2024

WHEN THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

Poison Help is Here for You.

POISON HELP
1-800-222-1222

About the Epi Monthly

The Epi Monthly Report is a publication of the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County: Epidemiology, Disease Control & Immunization Services. The publication serves a primary audience of physicians, nurses, and public health professionals. Articles published in the Epi Monthly Report may focus on quantitative research and analysis, program updates, field investigations, or provider education. For more information or to submit an article, please contact Yoselin Rodriguez at (786) 582-2266 or Yoselin.Rodriguez@flhealth.gov.

