

PRESS RELEASE

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**19 November 2014: Launch of GrippeNet.fr 2014-2015 season
Public participation in online influenza surveillance**

Launched 3 years ago by the Sentinelles Network (Inserm–Pierre and Marie Curie University Joint Research Unit 1136) and the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS), the GrippeNet.fr website returns for a fourth consecutive year.

GrippeNet.fr complements the traditional surveillance systems for influenza, which are fed information collected in private physician practices and hospitals. These data enable research initiatives (at European as well as national level) aimed at gaining a better understanding of influenza (research on risk factors, the role of age, demand for health care, impact of vaccination, spread of the disease at European level, etc.), and help to monitor changes in the epidemic over time within the population.

The principle of the [GrippeNet.fr](https://www.grippenet.fr/) (<https://www.grippenet.fr/>) website is to **enable anyone living in metropolitan France, and who wishes to participate in influenza surveillance, whether ill or not, to do so anonymously and voluntarily, regardless of age, nationality or state of health.**



Do you live in metropolitan France? Get involved in influenza surveillance and research.

There is no need to be sick to participate—all you need is an e-mail address.

Visit www.grippenet.fr or contact us at contact@grippenet.fr

You can also visit our [Facebook page](#), "[GrippeNet.fr](#)" or follow us on [Twitter @GrippeNet](#)

*This study is coordinated by Inserm, Pierre and Marie Curie University,
and the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance*

Review of the last season

During the 2013-2014 season, GrippeNet.fr enabled the collection of a large amount of data regarding influenza, over a 5-month period (from 13 November 2013 to 13 April 2014). Although the number of participants remained stable, with **6,000 Internet users**, weekly participation increased, with an average of **4,000 questionnaires** completed each week (compared with 3,700 during the 2012-2013 season). This season showed an increased retention of participants in the GrippeNet.fr study.



During the 2013-2014 season, **24%** of participants **reported symptoms consistent with an influenza-like illness** (compared with 29% during the 2012-2013 season), which may reflect the short duration of the influenza epidemic. The latter only lasted 5 weeks, and is one of the shortest epidemics recorded by the Sentinelles network. Only **42%** of participants with an influenza-like illness **consulted a health professional**. (More information available at [review of 2013-2014 season](#)).

The new season, 2014-2015

Spotlight on pregnant women, a population at risk of developing influenza-related complications

Influenza can have serious consequences for the mother and her infant during pregnancy. Since 2012, influenza vaccination has therefore been recommended in France for all pregnant women. In practice, however, it is difficult to assess whether this recommendation is being closely followed.

As well as the usual monitoring of the general population, specific surveillance of pregnant women has been put in place this year. Project G-GrippeNet is aimed at estimating the frequency of influenza in this particular population, and the number of women vaccinated for influenza during their pregnancy in France. This study is the very first use of the GrippeNet.fr tool to monitor one population in particular.

Once she has created her personal account on www.grippe.net.fr, the mother-to-be will complete the first enrolment questionnaire, in which she will reply “yes” to the question “Are you pregnant?” Every week, she will then be invited to complete a questionnaire on symptoms (identical to that on GrippeNet.fr). Another will also be made available to her if she wishes to report the occurrence of a particular event during her pregnancy, or report that she has had her baby. Participants will also receive a monthly newsletter dealing with a pregnancy-related health topic.

In order for GrippeNet.fr estimates to be as reliable as possible, large-scale participation by the population is essential. This makes it possible to study changes in the influenza epidemic over time for different population categories, especially men and young participants, who have been under-represented in past seasons, and now pregnant women. Everyone is invited to participate, regardless of his/her state of health (not susceptible to winter infections, or often sick in winter), age, profession, etc.

Recap of the GrippeNet.fr project

This surveillance system was launched at the end of January 2012 by the Sentinelles network (an Inserm–Pierre and Marie Curie University joint research unit) and the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS).

The GrippeNet.fr system enables the collection of epidemiological data on influenza directly from members of the public in metropolitan France using the Internet. Data compiled by GrippeNet.fr are not intended to replace information validated by health professionals, but provide complementary information, especially on patients who do not consult health facilities.

Participation in GrippeNet.fr, takes only a few minutes. When registering on the website, only an email address is required. After completing a questionnaire, the participant is invited each week to complete a short questionnaire summarising the symptoms s/he has or has not experienced since last logging in (fever, cough, etc.). These anonymous data are immediately analysed, and contribute in real time to influenza surveillance in France. Participation in this programme is not, of course, a substitute for a visit to one’s GP.

GrippeNet.fr is a project funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR) under the HARMS-flu project (Harmonising Multiple Scales for Approaches to the Modelling of Influenza Spread in France). GrippeNet.fr is part of a European population-based approach for the surveillance of influenza-like illness, Influzanet. For this new season, 8 other European countries have systems comparable to GrippeNet.fr, and over 40,000 Europeans participated in this surveillance during the 2013-2014 season.