



Chicago Flu Update



Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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News & Updates

As long as influenza viruses are circulating and unexpired vaccine is available, influenza vaccinations should continue to be offered. Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. Chicagoans should ask their healthcare provider or pharmacist about vaccine availability. For those without a healthcare provider or whose healthcare providers do not have the influenza vaccine, a list of City of Chicago [Walk-In Immunization Clinics](#)¹ is available on the city website and by calling 311. To locate the closest City of Chicago clinic or retail pharmacy, go to www.chicagoflushots.org.



What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection is decreasing.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of March 31-April 6, 2019, 13 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Since September 30, 2018, 313 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; 298 were positive for influenza A (125 H1N1pdm09, 14 H3N2, and 159 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and 15 were positive for influenza B. The median age of reported cases is 59 years (range 1 month-92 years); one pediatric death was reported and 17 cases were admitted from long-term care facilities; selected attributes are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Selected attributes of influenza-associated intensive care unit hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents during the 2018-2019 season, October-May.

Age Group	#	%	Sex	#	%
0-4	39	12	Male	148	49
5-17	18	6	Female	154	51
18-24	6	2	Med. Cond./Complication [†]		
25-49	52	17	Lung Disease	126	40
50-64	88	28	Cardiac Disease	114	36
≥65	110	35	Diabetes	77	25
Race/Ethnicity			Ventilator Support	75	24
NH-White	68	22	Reported Deaths [‡]	13	4
NH-Black	166	53	Treatment/Vaccination [†]		
Hispanic	64	21	Reported Antiviral Tx	264	84
Asian/Other	14	4	Reported Flu Shot	92	29

* Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding; † As reported in INEDSS (Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System); ‡ Date of death occurring within one week of positive influenza test among reported influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of March 31-April 6, 2019, 253 of the 1,287 (19.7%) specimens tested for influenza were positive; 234 typed as influenza A (31 H1N1pdm09, 45 H3N2, and 158 unknown subtype) and 19 typed as influenza B (Figure 2).

Since September 30, 2018, 2,811 of 25,441 (11%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 2,696 typed as influenza A (669 H1N1pdm09, 209 H3N2, and 1,818 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 115 typed as influenza B.

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2018-2019) and previous season, October-May.

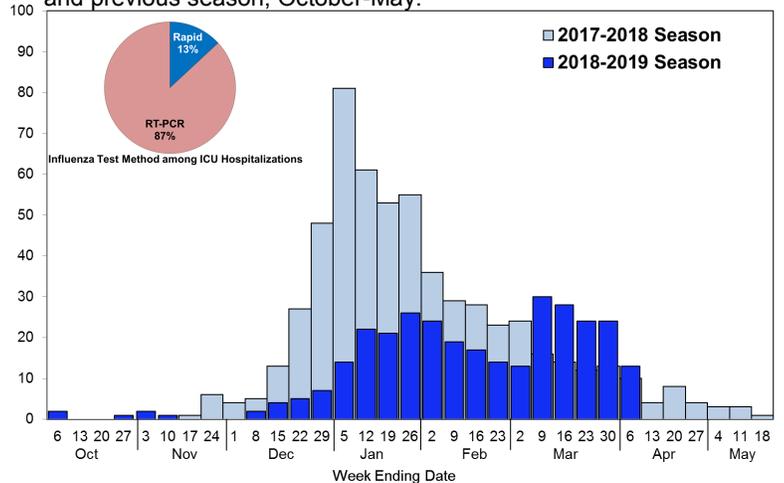
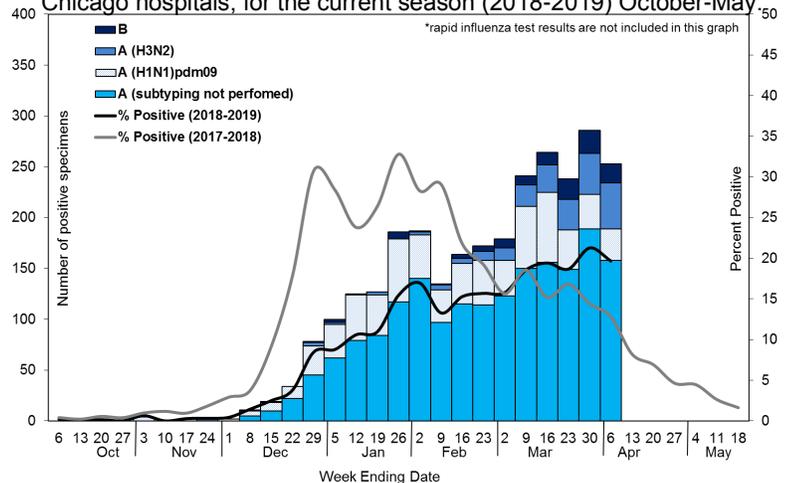


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR*) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2018-2019) October-May.



All data are preliminary and may change as more reports are received.

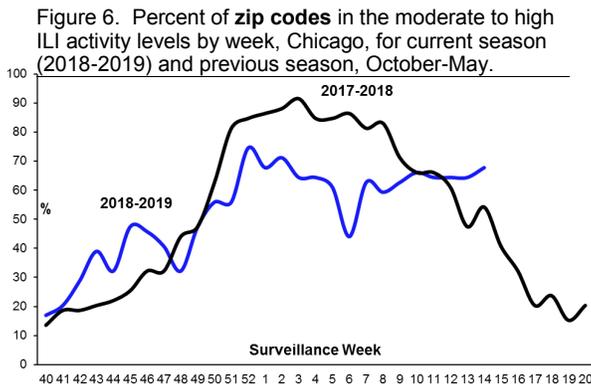
¹ https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/immunizations_walk-inclinics.html

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

Several outpatient clinics throughout Chicago participate in CDC's Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) by reporting on a weekly basis the total number of outpatient clinic visits, and of those visits, the number with influenza-like illness (ILI). For the week of March 31-April 6, 2019, 150 of the 5,640 (2.7%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is similar to Illinois (2.2%), Region 5 (2.2%) and the U.S. (2.8%) (Figure 3).

In addition to ILINet, ESSENCE is an electronic syndromic surveillance system that utilizes the chief complaints of patients visiting emergency departments to monitor for influenza-like illness. Currently, ESSENCE captures nearly every emergency department visit in the city on a daily basis. For the week of March 31-April 6, 2019, 762 of the 25,662 (3.0%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (Figure 4).

Figure 5 represents the percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza-like illness aggregated by patient zip code. For the week of March 31-April 6, 2019, 40 of 59 (68%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories; this is higher than last season where 54% of zip codes were at moderate to high levels for the same time period (Figure 6).



Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FluView² report provides national updates and trends related to the intensity of influenza activity across the United States, as well as detailed information on antiviral resistance, severity of illness, and other topics. Updates specific to Illinois³ and Suburban Cook County⁴ are also available online. Current and archived issues of the Chicago Flu Update can be found on the CDPH website section Current Flu Situation in Chicago⁵.

Reporting Information

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued influenza testing and reporting recommendations⁶. In addition, The Chicago Department of Public Health recently issued guidance on reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations⁷. Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)⁸

All data are preliminary and may change as more reports are received.

Figure 3. Percent of medically-attended outpatient visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by ILINet facilities, Chicago, by week for the current season (2018-2019) and for Illinois, Region 5, and U.S., October-May.

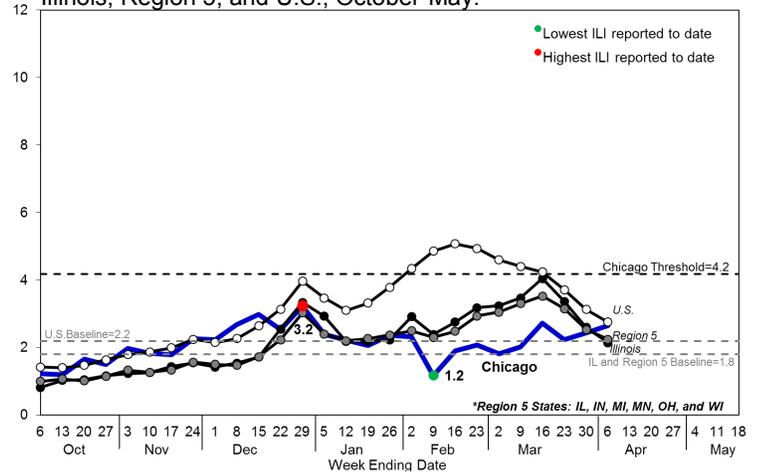


Figure 4. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2018-2019) and previous two seasons, October-May.

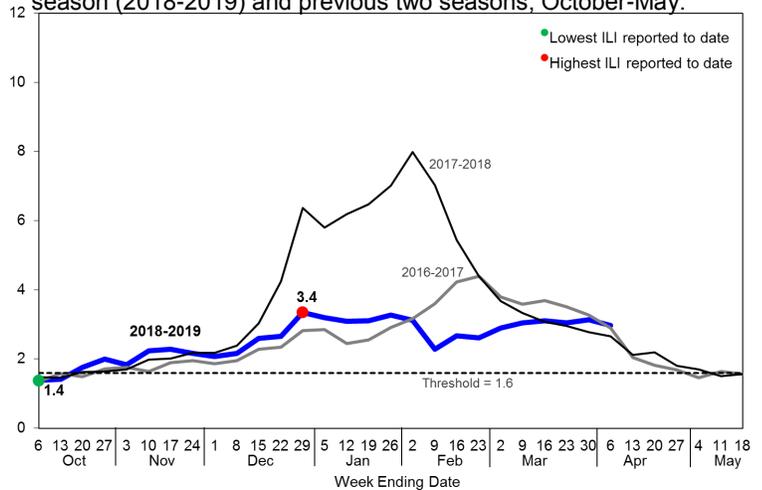
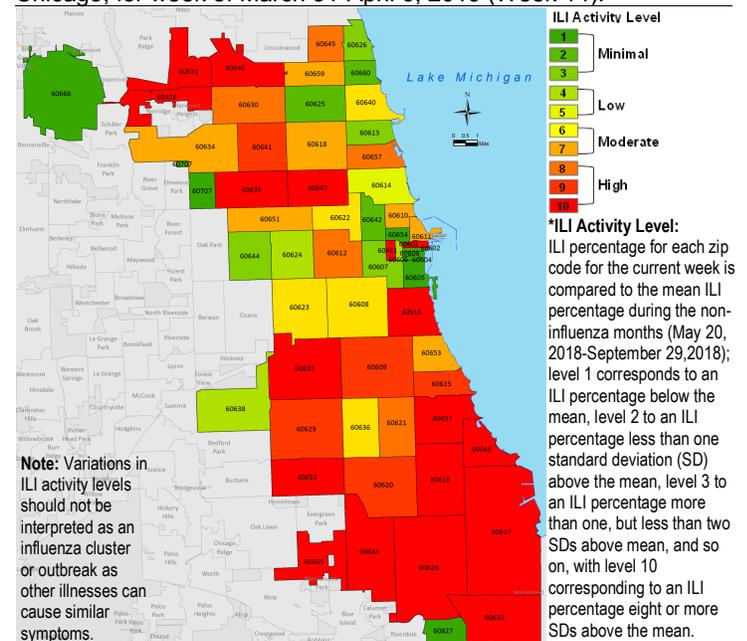


Figure 5. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of March 31-April 6, 2019 (Week 14).



² <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ³ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance#publications>;

⁴ <http://cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports/communicable-diseases>; ⁵ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html; ⁶ dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ohp-annual-flu-testing-guidance-09182018.pdf; ⁷ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41>; ⁸ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>