



Chicago Flu Update



Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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Julie Morita, MD, Commissioner

News & Updates

Currently, the Illinois Department of Public Health continues to recommend [temporary hospital visitor restrictions](#)¹ during times of increased influenza-like illness in the community. 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](#)² 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 high.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of February 17-23, 2019, 8 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Since September 30, 2018, 152 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; 144 were positive for influenza A (69 H1N1pdm09, 3 H3N2, and 72 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and eight were positive for influenza B. The median age of reported cases is 56.5 years (range 1 month-92 years); one pediatric death was reported and eight 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	20	13	Male	78	51
5-17	11	7	Female	74	49
18-24	3	2	Med. Cond./Complication [†]		
25-49	26	17	Lung Disease	59	39
50-64	42	28	Cardiac Disease	47	31
≥65	50	33	Diabetes	36	24
Race/Ethnicity			Ventilator Support	41	27
NH-White	28	18	Reported Deaths [‡]	8	5
NH-Black	83	55	Treatment/Vaccination [†]		
Hispanic	32	21	Reported Antiviral Tx	130	86
Asian/Other	9	6	Reported Flu Shot	39	26

* 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 February 17-23, 2019, with 5 laboratories reporting, 158 of the 993 (15.9%) specimens tested for influenza were positive; 153 typed as influenza A (44 H1N1pdm09, 9 H3N2, and 100 unknown subtype) and five typed as influenza B (Figure 2).

Since September 30, 2018, 1,336 of 17,637 (7.6%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 1,313 typed as influenza A (400 H1N1pdm09, 34 H3N2, and 879 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 23 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.

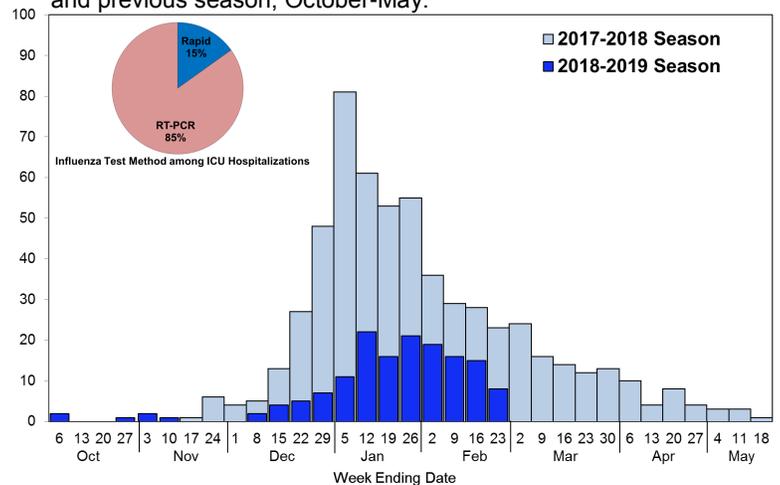
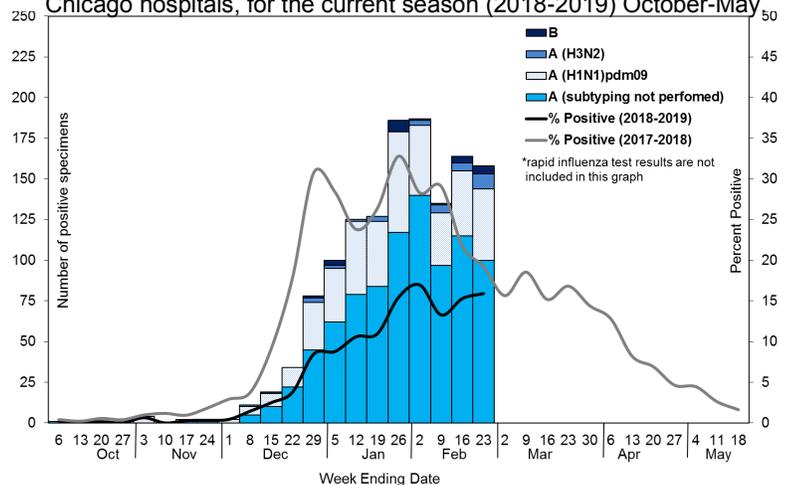


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR*) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2018-2019) October-May.



¹ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/IDPH+2019+Influenza+Hospital+Visitor+Restrictions/ca920705-b756-4ebd-85b8-a65fed206bce>;

² https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdp/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 February 17-23, 2019, 117 of the 5,619 (2.1%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is lower than Illinois (3.2%), Region 5 (3.0%) and the U.S. (5.0%) (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 February 17-23, 2019, 650 of the 24,885 (2.6%) 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 February 17-23, 2019, 35 of 59 (59%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories; this is lower than last season where 83% of zip codes were at moderate to high levels for the same time period (Figure 6).

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.

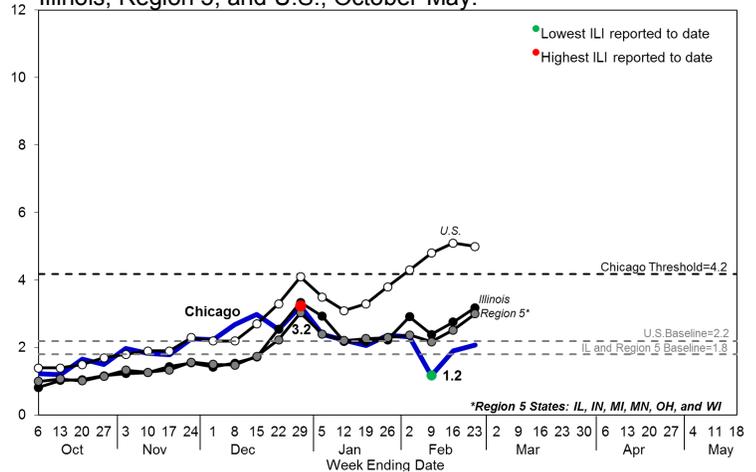


Figure 4. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2018-2019) and previous two seasons, October-May.

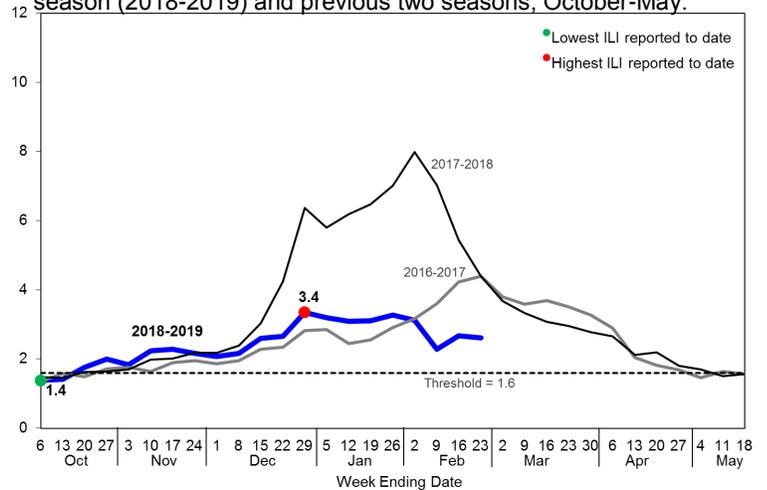
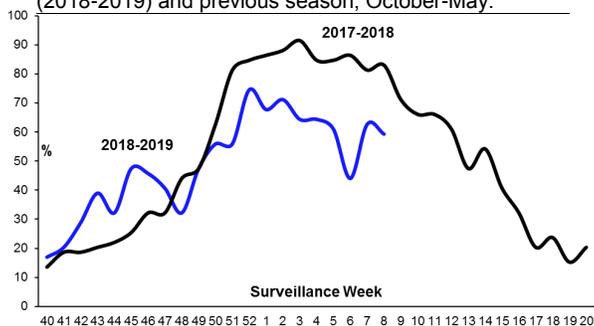


Figure 6. Percent of zip codes in the moderate to high ILI activity levels by week, Chicago, for current season (2018-2019) and previous season, October-May.



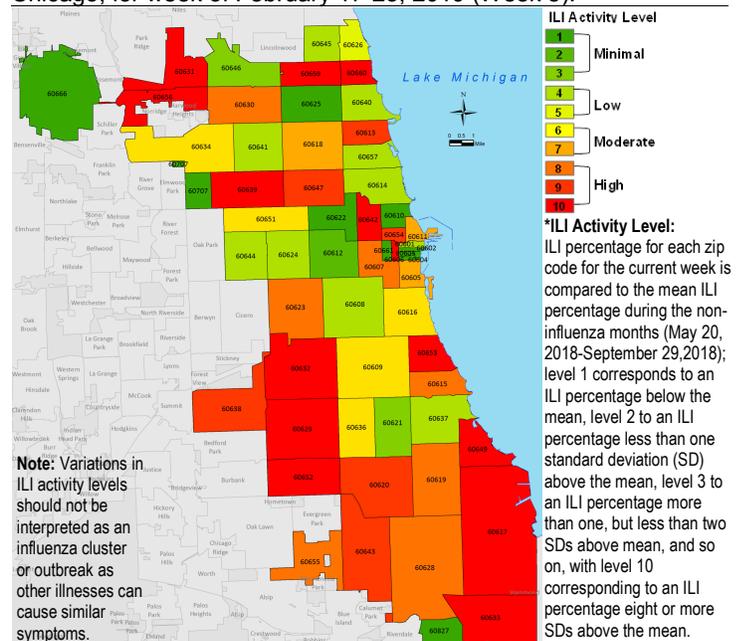
Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FluView³ 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 Illinois⁴ and Suburban Cook County⁵ 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 Chicago⁶.

Reporting Information

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued influenza testing and reporting recommendations⁷. In addition, The Chicago Department of Public Health recently issued guidance on reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations⁸. Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)⁹.

Figure 5. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of February 17-23, 2019 (Week 8).



³ <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ⁴ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance#publications>;

⁵ <http://cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports/communicable-diseases>; ⁶ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html; ⁷ dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ohp-annual-flu-testing-guidance-09182018.pdf; ⁸ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41>; ⁹ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>