



Chicago Flu Update



Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

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News & Updates

Illinois Department of Public Health recently issued [Influenza Testing and Reporting Guidance](#)¹ which outlines influenza testing recommendations and reporting requirements. 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 schedule of [City of Chicago influenza vaccination 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 low.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of October 6-12, 2019, no influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Influenza-associated ICU Hospitalizations

Since the 2010-2011 influenza season, 2,363 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported for Chicago residents with the last two seasons alone accounting for 40% of cases (Figure 2). The majority of reported cases were 50 years of age and older (65%) and NH-Black (46%). A total of 149 (6%) deaths were reported among ICU hospitalizations, occurring within one week of testing positive for influenza; however, 342 (14%) deaths occurred within one month of testing positive. The average number of cases reported in a week was eight with a maximum number of 81 cases reported last season. The number of reported ICU hospitalizations begins to increase in late November to early December and usually peaks in February (four of the previous nine seasons); the earliest peak occurred in December (2012-2013) and latest peak occurred in March (2011-2012).

Figure 2. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents for the previous nine influenza seasons, October-May.

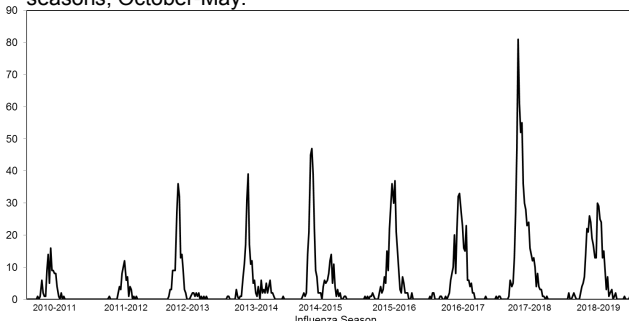


Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2019-2020) and previous season (2018-2019), October-May.

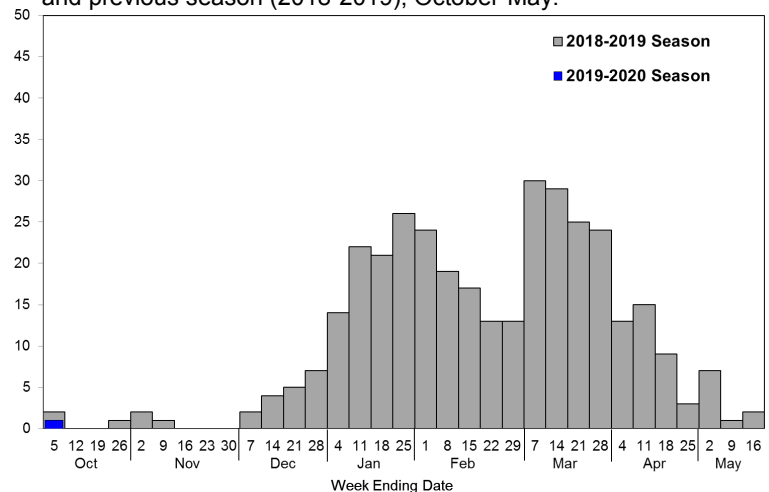
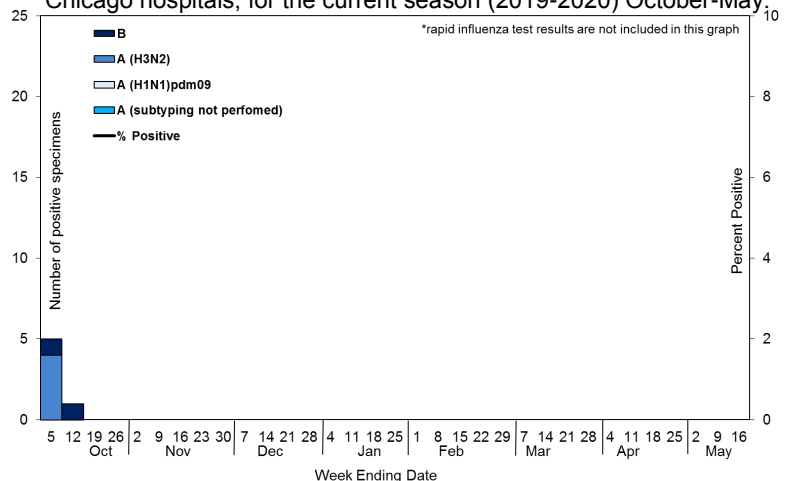


Figure 3. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2019-2020) October-May.



Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of October 6-12, 2019, 1 of the 723 (<1%) specimens tested for influenza was positive for influenza B (Figure 3).

Since September 29, 2019, 6 of 1,444 (<1%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 4 typed as influenza A (4 H3N2, 0 H1N1pdm09, and 0 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 2 typed as influenza B.

¹ www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/20190916idphohp-annual-flu-testing.pdf

² https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/flu-clinics-in-the-city-of-chicago.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 October 6-12, 2019, 86 of the 5,474 (1.6%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is similar to Illinois at 1.7% (**Figure 4**).

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 October 6-12, 2019, 494 of the 24,658 (2.0%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (**Figure 5**).

Figure 6 represents the percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza-like illness aggregated by patient zip code. For the week of October 6-12, 2019, 12 of 59 (20%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high; this is similar to last season where 20% of zip codes were also at moderate to high levels for the same time period.

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [FluView](#)³ 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 [Illinois](#)⁴ and [Suburban Cook County](#)⁵ 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 Chicago](#)⁶.

Reporting Information

Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System ([INEDSS](#))⁷. Contact SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org for more information. The Chicago Department of Public Health has previously issued guidance on [reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations](#)⁸.

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Figure 4. Percent of medically-attended **outpatient** visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by **ILINet** facilities, Chicago, by week for the current season (2019-2020) and previous season, October-May.

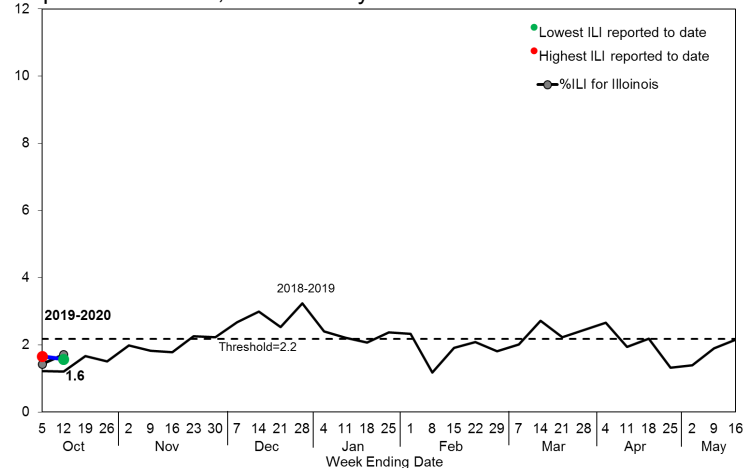


Figure 5. Percent of **emergency department** visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to **ESSENCE**, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2019-2020) and previous two seasons, October-May.

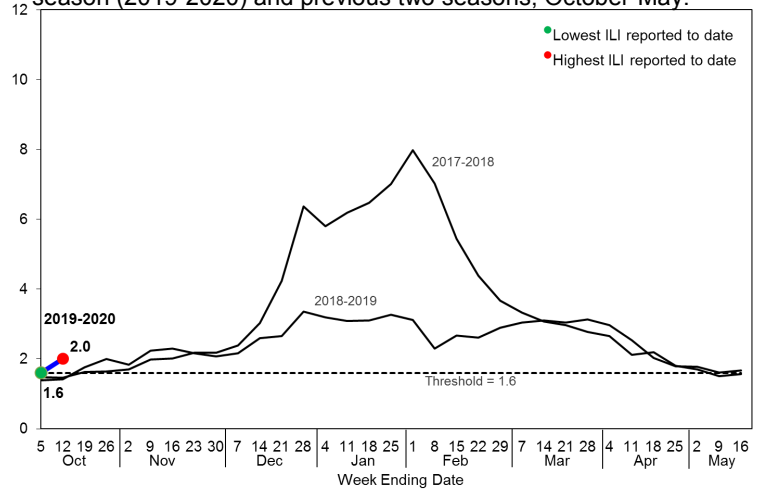
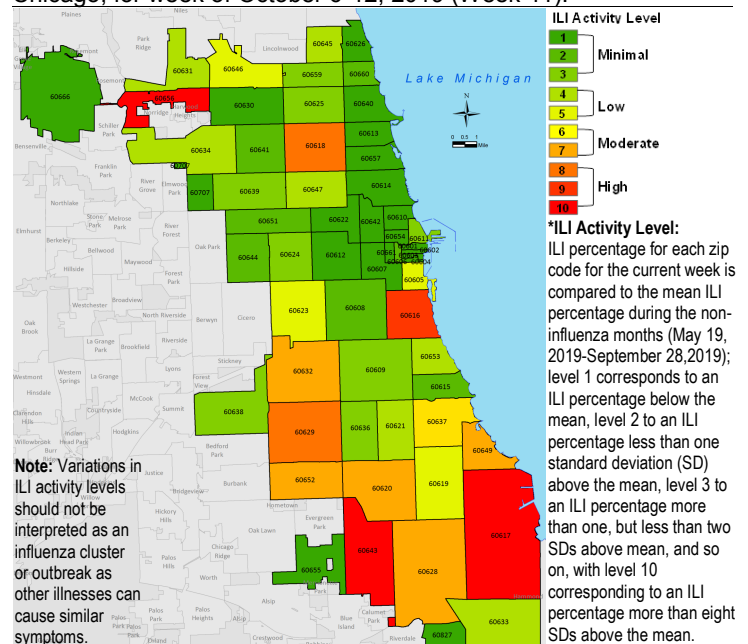


Figure 6. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to **ESSENCE**, Chicago, for week of October 6-12, 2019 (Week 41).



³ <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ⁴ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance>; ⁵ <https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/influenza/>;

⁶ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html; ⁷ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>;

⁸ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41>