



Chicago Flu Update



Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

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News & Updates

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](#)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 continues to increase.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of December 8-14, 2019, four influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (**Figure 1**).

Since September 29, 2019, 12 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; 11 were positive for influenza A (3 H3N2, 2 H1N1pdm09, 6 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 1 was positive for influenza B.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of December 8-14, 2019, 70 of the 1,136 (6.2%) specimens tested for influenza were positive; 29 typed as influenza A (1 H3N2, 8 H1N1pdm09, and 20 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 41 typed as influenza B (**Figure 2**).

Since September 29, 2019, 192 of 9,519 (2.0%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 86 typed as influenza A (17 H3N2, 17 H1N1pdm09, and 52 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 106 typed as influenza B. The cumulative percent of specimens testing positive for influenza is higher than last season during the same time period (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Cumulative percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2019-2020), and previous two seasons, October-May.

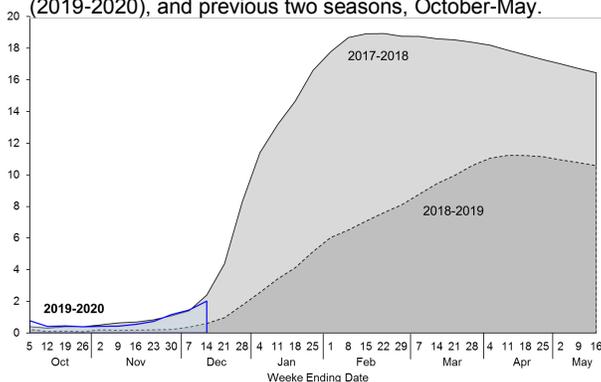


Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2019-2020) and previous season (2018-2019), October-May.

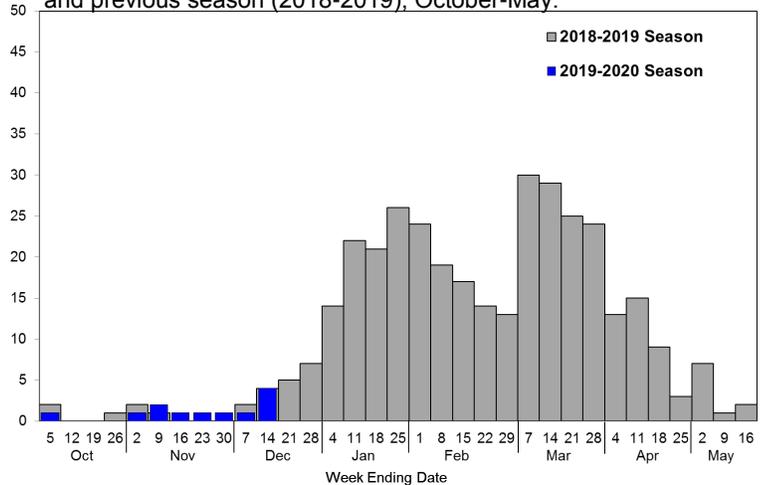
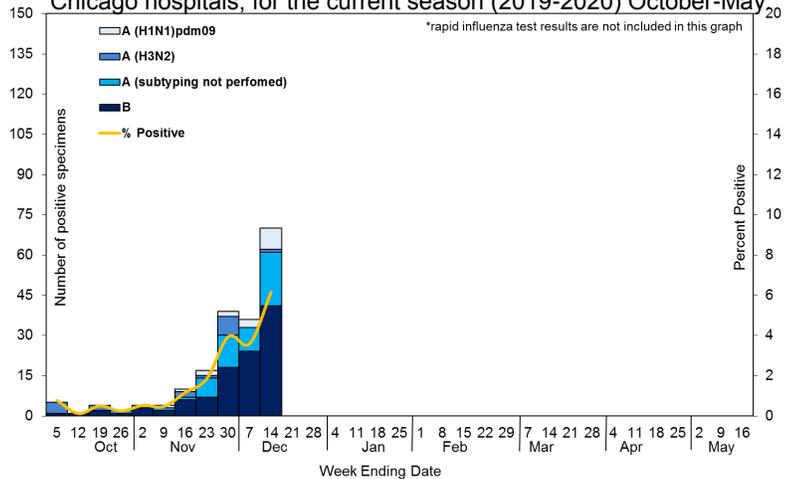


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2019-2020) October-May.



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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/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 December 8-14, 2019, 193 of the 5,578 (3.5%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is similar to Illinois at 3.3% (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 December 8-14, 2019, 886 of the 24,881 (3.6%) 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 December 8-14, 2019, 38 of 59 (64%) zip codes had moderate to high ILI activity levels; this is higher than last season where 56% of zip codes were at moderate to high levels for the same time period and the second consecutive week where over half of zip codes had moderate to high ILI activity levels.

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 Chicago](#)⁵.

Reporting Information

Illinois Department of Public Health recently issued [Influenza Testing and Reporting Guidance](#)⁶. The Chicago Department of Public Health has previously issued guidance on [reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations](#)⁷. Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)⁸. For more information contact: SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org

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.

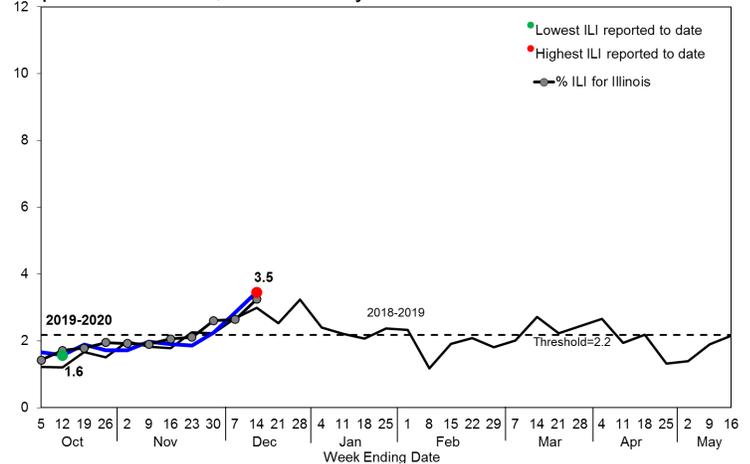


Figure 5. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2019-2020) and previous two seasons, October-May.

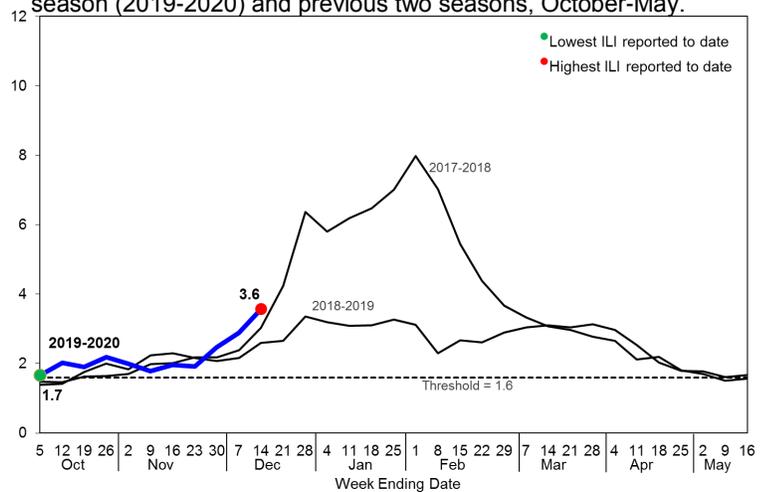
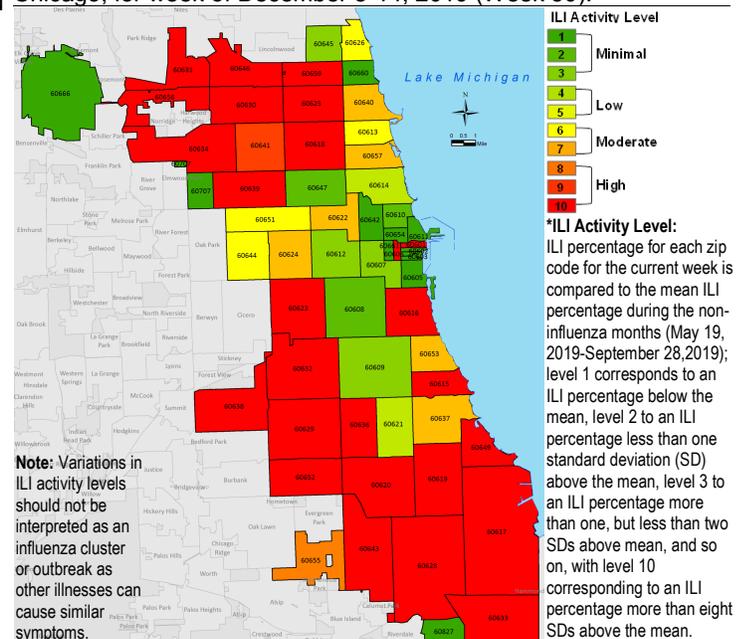


Figure 6. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of December 8-14, 2019 (Week 50).



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

² <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ³ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance>; ⁴ <https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/influenza/>;

⁵ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html;

⁶ www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/20190916idphohp-annual-flu-testing.pdf ;

⁷ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41>; ⁸ <httpsdph.partner.illinois.gov/>