Chicago Department of Public Health

Chicago Flu Update

City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

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Chicago Department of Public Health
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What is the risk?

In Chicago, the risk of influenza infection remains low, however influenza-like illness (ILI) appears to be increasing. Nationally, ILI activity has increased and remains high in the Southeastern United States, which has accounted for 58% of all reported influenza viruses this season. During surveillance week 50 of 2009 (December 13-19, 2009), 100% of all subtyped influenza A viruses reported to CDC were 2009 influenza A (H1N1) viruses. Currently, influenza A (H1N1) viruses account for approximately 5% of subtyped influenza A viruses; with influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B viruses predominating this season. Local data suggest a similar pattern of activity, with a predominance of influenza A (H3N2) strains circulating. Influenza activity usually peaks in January or February and vaccination is the best way to protect against human influenza infection; all Chicagoans aged six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. Vaccine is available in doctor's offices, retail pharmacies, CDPH Neighborhood Health Centers, and immunization walk-in clinics. A list of CDPH clinics is available on the City of Chicago website[1] and by calling 311.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

No influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for surveillance week 50 (December 12-18, 2010). Cases meeting the current influenza reporting requirements[2] should be reported to CDPH via INEDSS[3].

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

For the week of December 12-18, 2010, with 17 hospitals reporting, 4.9% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). In both pediatric hospitals, rates have increased for the second consecutive week (Figure 1). From December 12-18, 2010, with 10 Chicago ILINet outpatient clinics reporting, 2.1% of doctor's office visits were due to ILI. CDC uses data collected by ILINet to produce a measure of ILI activity by state (Figure 2). Click on the map for more information on each state's activity levels.
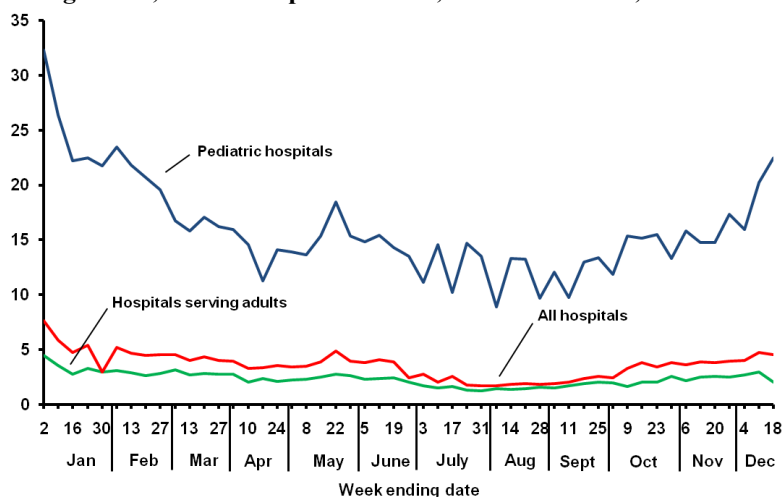
Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of December 12-18, 2010, with 6 laboratories reporting, 6 of the 150 specimens tested were positive for influenza. Four specimens were subtyped as influenza A (H3N2); 1 was subtyped as influenza A (H1N1) and 1 was subtyped as influenza B.
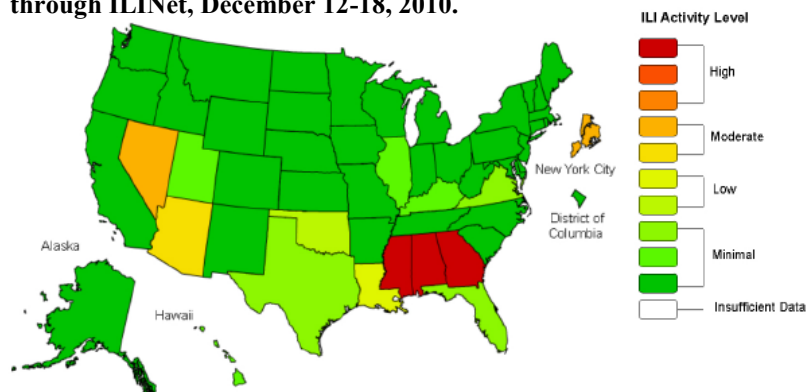
Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Flu-View[4] 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[5] and Suburban Cook County[6] are also available online.

Figure 1. Weekly reported percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness in pediatric hospitals, hospitals serving adults, and all hospitals overall, December 12-18, 2010.

Figure 2. Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity* level by state, determined using the proportion of doctor's office visits due to ILI as reported through ILINet, December 12-18, 2010.

* activity levels are compared to the average percent of ILI visits during the spring and fall weeks when little or no influenza virus circulation is occurring. Minimal activity corresponds to ILI activity below the average and high activity corresponds to ILI activity much higher than the average. Data is preliminary and may change as more data is received.

[1] http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/clinic/svcs/find_a_clinic.html; [2] https://www.chicagohan.org/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=28960&folderId=24344&name=DLFE-144.pdf; [3] https://www.idphnet.com; [4] http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/; [5] http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/fluupdate10-11.htm; [6] http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/flu_current_situation