



Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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Chicago Department of Public Health
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What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection in the Chicago area is low. At the national level, CDC has reported a low percentage of specimens testing positive for seasonal influenza. The majority have been seasonal influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B viruses. Although few viruses have been available for testing at CDC, isolates that have been tested remain susceptible to the antiviral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). Vaccination is the best way to protect against human seasonal influenza infection and all Chicagoans aged six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. Chicagoans should ask their healthcare provider or pharmacist about vaccine availability. Uninsured individuals and those with insurance that does not cover flu shots can obtain a voucher for a free flu shot at Walgreens by submitting a request at www.citychicago.org/health and clicking on [Free Walgreens Flu Vaccine Vouchers](#)¹ in the Alerts Section. The Chicago Department of Public Health continues to hold influenza vaccination clinics throughout the city. A complete schedule of [City of Chicago influenza vaccine clinics](#)² is available on the City website and by calling 311.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

No influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 46 (November 13-19, 2011). Suspected novel influenza, pediatric influenza-associated deaths and influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations should all be reported to CDPH via [INEDSS](#)³. Outbreaks of influenza-like illness in a congregate setting are also reportable; in Chicago these reports can be made by phone to (312) 746-5911. To date, no cases meeting the reporting criteria have been reported to CDPH.

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

For the week of November 13-19, 2011, with 12 hospitals reporting, 2.4% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat) (Figure 1). Several outpatient clinics throughout Chicago participate in the Influenza-like Illness Network (ILINet) by reporting the percentage of clinic visits due to ILI. From November 13-19, 2011, with 16 outpatient clinics reporting, 1.8% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is similar to levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2010 (Figure 2).

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of November 13-19, 2011, with 3 laboratories reporting, none of the 83 specimens tested for influenza were positive. Since October 2011, less than one percent of the total 854 specimens tested for influenza have been positive.

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [FluView](#)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, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous two seasons, October-May.

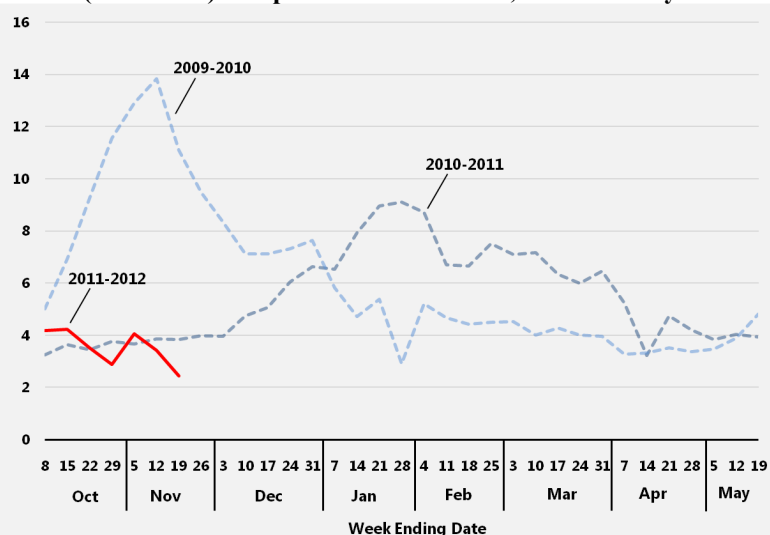
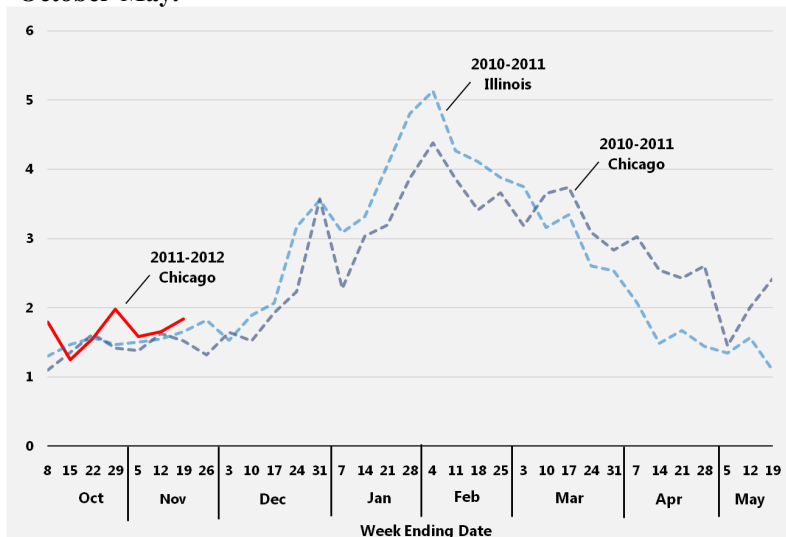


Figure 2. Weekly reported percent of outpatient clinic visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous season (Chicago and Illinois), October-May.



¹http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/flu/alerts/2011/nov/free_walgreens_fluvaccinevouchers.html; ²http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/flu/svcs/_cdph_flu_shot_sitesacrosschicago.html; ³<https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>; ⁴<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ⁵<http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/surveillance.htm>; ⁶<http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports#Influenza>