



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. Nationally, influenza activity remains low in the United States. The few influenza viruses that have been available for testing at CDC have shown that they remain susceptible to the antiviral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®). All of the influenza A viruses that CDC has characterized to date are similar to components of the 2011-2012 influenza vaccine for the Northern Hemisphere. However, it is too early in the influenza season to determine how well the seasonal vaccine strains and circulating strains will match. 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](#)¹. The Chicago Department of Public Health has influenza vaccine available at [CDPH immunization clinics](#)².

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

No influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 50 (December 11-17, 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 December 11-17, 2011, with 16 hospitals reporting, 3.1% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This is lower than levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2010 (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 December 11-17, 2011, with 15 outpatient clinics reporting, 1.9% 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 December 11-17, 2011, with 5 laboratories reporting, none of the 160 specimens tested for influenza were positive. Since October 2011, 3 out of the 1,447 specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 2 typed as influenza A (1 H3 and 1 not subtyped) and 1 typed as influenza B.

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.

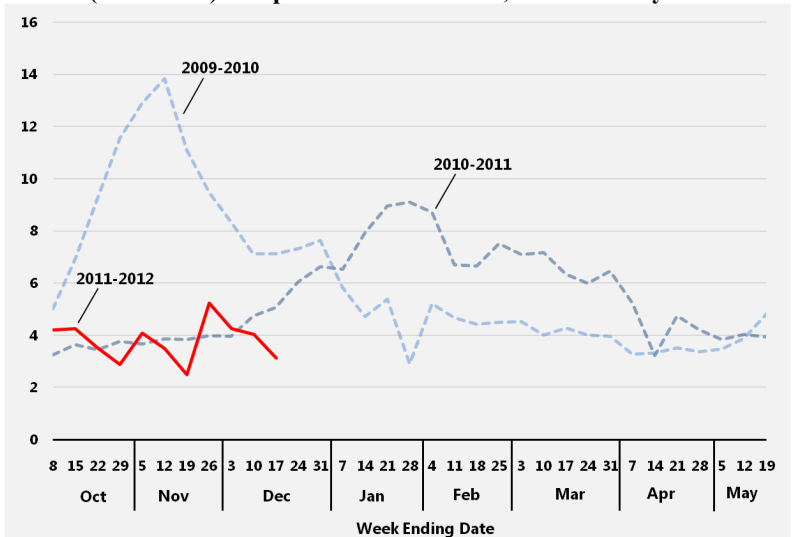
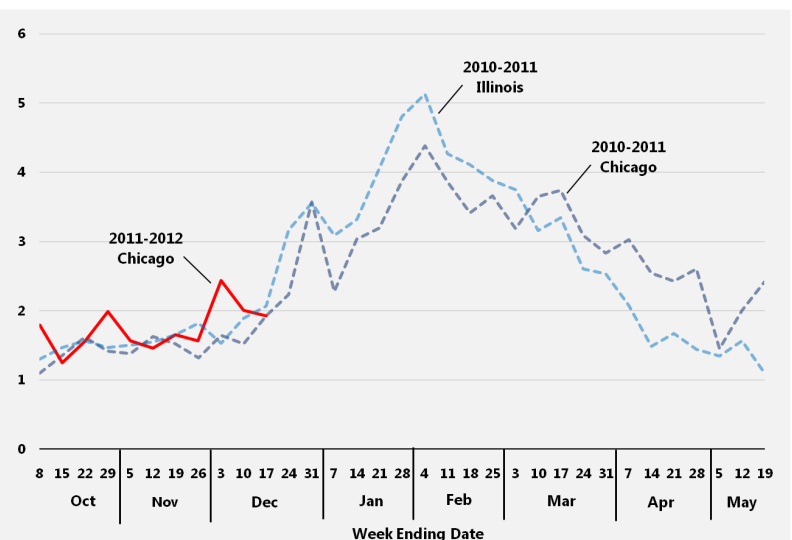


Figure 2. Weekly reported percent of outpatient clinic visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous season (Chicago and Illinois), October-May.



¹<https://www.chicagohan.org/ViewsFlash/servlet/viewsflash?cmd=showform&pollid=Vouchers!Indiv>; ²http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/infectious/immunizations_walk-inclinics.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>