What is the risk?
Currently, the risk of influenza infection is high.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?
For the week of January 27 - February 2, 2019, 16 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Since September 30, 2018, 108 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; 101 were positive for influenza A (50 H1N1pdm09, 2 H3N2, and 49 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and seven were positive for influenza B. The median age of reported cases is 56.5 years (range 6 months - 92 years); seven cases were admitted from long-term care facilities; selected attributes are summarized in Table 1.

Which influenza strains are circulating?
Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of January 27 - February 2, 2019, with 6 laboratories reporting, 187 of the 1,103 (17.0%) specimens tested for influenza were positive; 186 typed as influenza A (43 H1N1pdm09, 3 H3N2, and 140 unknown subtype) and one typed as influenza B (Figure 3).

Since September 30, 2018, 879 of 14,554 (6.0%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 866 typed as influenza A (284 H1N1pdm09, 15 H3N2, and 567 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 13 typed as influenza B.
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 January 27-February 2, 2019, 68 of the 2,921 (2.3%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is similar to both Illinois (2.9%) and Region 5 (2.5%) but lower than the U.S. (4.3%) (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 every emergency department visit in the city on a daily basis. For the week of January 27-February 2, 2019, 649 of the 20,781 (3.1%) 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 January 27-February 2, 2019, 36 of 59 (61%) zip codes had ILL activity levels in the moderate to high categories; this is lower than last season where 85% of zip codes were at moderate to high levels for the same time period (Figure 7).

Where can I get more information?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s FluView 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 and Suburban Cook County 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.

Reporting Information
The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued influenza testing and reporting recommendations. In addition, The Chicago Department of Public Health recently issued guidance on reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations. Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS).