News & Updates
For the first time this season, the majority (54%) of specimens tested for influenza were positive for influenza B; in addition, the majority (52%) of reported influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were also positive for influenza B. Influenza B activity tends to increase towards the latter half of the influenza season. CDC interim 2017-2018 vaccine effectiveness estimates report that the influenza vaccine is 42% effective against influenza B viruses. Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans aged six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. In partnership with Walgreens pharmacy, CDPH has made additional influenza vaccine available for no out-of-pocket cost to individuals who are uninsured or unable to pay; visit the CDPH website for specific pharmacy locations. Also available is the City’s easy-to-use interactive map to find a location near you to get a flu shot.

What is the risk?
Currently, the risk of influenza infection continues to decrease, but remains elevated.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?
For the week of February 25-March 3, 2018, 21 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Since October 1, 2017, 468 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; 402 were positive for influenza A (127 H3N2, 17 H1N1, and 258 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and 66 were positive for influenza B. The median age of reported cases is 62 years (range of 5 days-102 years); 47 (10%) cases were admitted from long-term care facilities (LTCF) and 18 outbreaks have been reported in LTCF; two pediatric deaths were reported including one ICU hospitalization; 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 February 25-March 3, 2018, with 6 laboratories reporting, 181 of the 1,157 (15.6%) specimens tested for influenza were positive [17 A (H3N2), 4 A (H1N1)pdm09, 62 A unknown subtype and 98 influenza B] (Figure 2). Since October 1, 2017, 4,117 of 21,945 (18.8%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 3,471 typed as influenza A (1,187 H3N2, 163 (H1N1)pdm09, 2,121 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 646 typed as influenza B.

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?
ESSENCE is an electronic syndromic surveillance system used to monitor influenza-like illness by utilizing the chief complaints of patients visiting emergency departments. Currently, all Chicago hospitals submit data to ESSENCE on a

![Figure 1](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/pdfs/mm6706a2-H.pdf)  
![Figure 2](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/health_protection/news/2018/January/the-chicago-department-of-public-health-reminds-residents-its-no.html)
daily basis, covering every emergency department visit in the city. For the week of February 25-March 3, 2018, 916 of the 24,948 (3.7%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (ILI) (Figure 3). Children less than five years of age had the highest percentage of visits due to ILI at 11.2%.

In addition to emergency departments, several outpatient clinics throughout Chicago participate in CDC’s Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) by also 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 February 25-March 3, 2018, with 22 facilities reporting, 2.2% of outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness (Figure 4).

Figure 5 represents the percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza-like illness aggregated by patient zip code. For the week of February 25-March 3, 2018, 42 of 59 (71%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories and 17 (29%) had ILI activity levels in the minimal to low categories; the median percent ILI was 3.1% with a range from <1% to 12.5% (Figure 6).

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 healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INE DSS).

Note: Variations in ILI activity levels should not be interpreted as an influenza cluster or outbreak as other illnesses can cause similar symptoms.

ILI Activity Level: ILI percentage for each zip code for the current week is compared to the mean ILI percentage during the non-influenza months (May 21, 2017–September 30, 2017); level 1 corresponds to an ILI percentage below the mean, level 2 to an ILI percentage less than one standard deviation (SD) above the mean, level 3 to an ILI percentage more than one, but less than two SDs above mean, and so on, with level 10 corresponding to an ILI percentage eight or more SDs above the mean.

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

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