Are severe cases of influenza occurring?  
The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued influenza testing and reporting guidelines.  
Suspected novel and variant influenza, pediatric influenza-associated deaths, influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations and outbreaks of influenza-like illness in a congregate setting should all be reported to CDPH via INEDSS.  

For the week of March 29-April 4, 2015, 12 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported; 1 was positive for influenza A (H1N1pdm09) and 11 were positive for influenza B.  

Since September 28, 2014, 270 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported (Figure 1).  
Among the total ICU hospitalizations reported, 215 were positive for influenza A (110 H3N2, 2 H1N1pdm09, and 103 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and 55 were positive for influenza B.  
One hundred twenty-four (46%) were non-Hispanic Black, 141 (52%) were female, and 168 (62%) were 50 years of age or older (median age of 60 years with a range of 1 month - 101 years).  
Eighty-seven (32%) had reported lung disease (including asthma) and 70 (26%) required ventilator support.  

Twenty-three deaths among ICU hospitalizations have been reported.

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?  
CDPH receives data from over 60 surveillance sites across Chicago, which report the total number of patient visits seen weekly, and of those visits, the number with influenza-like illness (ILI) (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat).  

Two hundred sixty-one emergency department visits were attributed to influenza-like illness based on manual reporting as determined by individual hospitals, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2014-2015) and previous three seasons, October-May.  

Currently, the risk of influenza infection remains elevated, but at lower levels than seen earlier in the season.  

Influenza B continues to account for nearly all of the influenza-associated ICU admissions reported during the past several weeks and the majority of specimens testing positive for influenza.  
Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans aged six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated.  
It is not too late to give or get an influenza vaccine.  
Chicagoans should ask their healthcare provider or pharmacist about vaccine availability.  
For those without a healthcare provider or whose healthcare providers do not have the influenza vaccine, a list of City of Chicago Fast-Track Immunization Clinics is available on the City website and by calling 311.  
To locate the closest City of Chicago clinic or retail pharmacy, go to www.chicagoflushots.org.
does. Currently, 10 Chicago hospitals submit data to ESSENCE. For the week of March 29-April 4, 2015, 2.7% of emergency department visits were due to ILI (Figure 3).

Several outpatient clinics and two large outpatient clinic networks located in Chicago participate in CDC’s Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) by reporting on the number of patients with ILI seen weekly. From March 29-April 4, 2015 with 39 facilities reporting, 4.7% of visits were due to influenza-like illness (Figure 4).

Which influenza strains are circulating?
Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of March 29-April 4, 2015, with 6 laboratories reporting, 87 of the 657 (13%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. Among this week’s positive specimens, 3 was typed as influenza A (1 H3N2, 1 H1N1pdm09, and 1 unknown subtype) and 84 were typed as influenza B (Figure 4).

Since September 28, 2014, 2,356 of 15,891 (14.8%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 1,812 typed as influenza A (7 H1N1pdm09, 1,487 H3N2 and 318 unknown subtype) and 5474 were typed as influenza B.

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. In 2013, the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC) and CDPH released “Stop the Spread: A Health Care Guide to Influenza Preparedness.” This report provides an overview of influenza, it’s impact on public health and how hospitals can prepare for, mitigate the impact of and respond to influenza infections and outbreaks.