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

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?
For the week of April 14-20, 2019, four influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Since September 30, 2018, 332 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; 315 were positive for influenza A (129 H1N1pdm09, 23 H3N2, and 163 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and 17 were positive for influenza B. The median age of reported cases is 59 years (range 1 month-92 years); one pediatric death was reported and 19 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 April 14-20, 2019, 123 of the 1,062 (11.6%) specimens tested for influenza were positive; 106 typed as influenza A (21 H1N1pdm09, 23 H3N2, and 62 unknown subtype) and 17 typed as influenza B (Figure 2).

Since September 30, 2018, 3,109 of 27,658 (11.2%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 2,961 typed as influenza A (714 H1N1pdm09, 258 H3N2, and 1,989 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 148 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 April 14-20, 2019, 117 of the 5,360 (2.2%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is similar to Illinois (1.5%), Region 5 (1.5%) and the U.S. (2.1%) (Figure 3).

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 nearly every emergency department visit in the city on a daily basis. For the week of April 14-20, 2019, 465 of the 22,880 (2.0%) total emergency department 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 April 14-20, 2019, 23 of 59 (39%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories; this is similar to last season where 32% of zip codes were at moderate to high levels for the same time period (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. 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 hospitalizations issued guidance on influenza testing and reporting recommendations.

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

*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 20, 2018-September 29,2018); 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 the mean, and so on, with level 10 corresponding to an ILI percentage eight or more SDs above the mean.