



# Chicago Flu Update



Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

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## News & Updates

This will be the last *Chicago Flu Update* issued for the 2020-2021 influenza season. The next update will be issued in October 2021. CDPH will continue to monitor surveillance indicators throughout the summer months. Influenza viruses are detected throughout the year at low levels and can cause disease. Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated annually.

## What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection is low.

## Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of May 9-15, 2021, no influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (Figure 1).

Since September 27, 2020, one influenza-associated ICU hospitalization has been reported.

## Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of May 16-22, 2021, 0 of the 398 reported specimens tested for influenza were positive (Figure 2).

Since September 27, 2020, 5 of the 25,655 reported specimens that were tested for influenza have been positive. The cumulative percent of specimens testing positive for influenza is lower than previous seasons for the same time period. The number of reported specimens tested for influenza is 41% lower compared to the same time period last season (Figure 3).<sup>§</sup>

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2020-2021) and previous season (2019-2020), October-May.

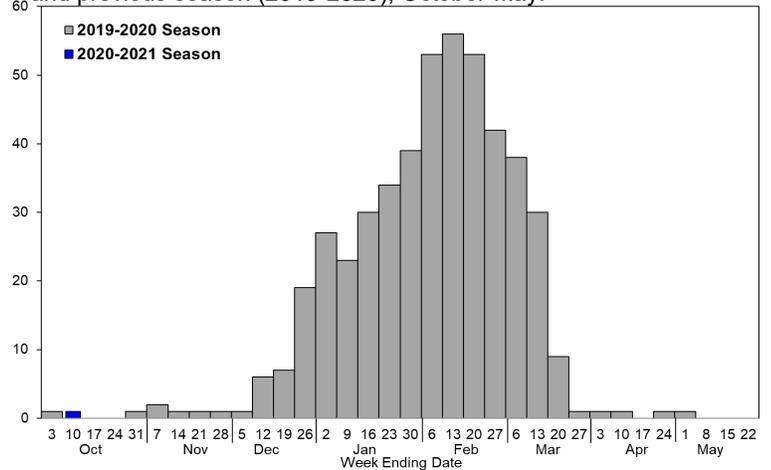


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2020-2021) October-May.

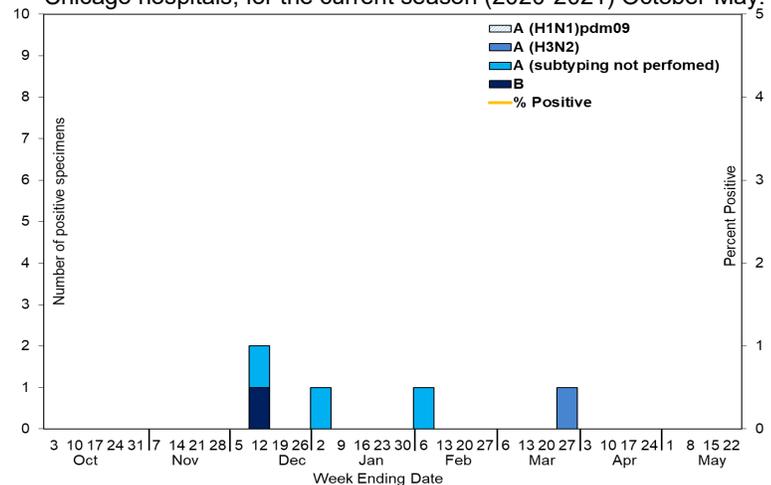
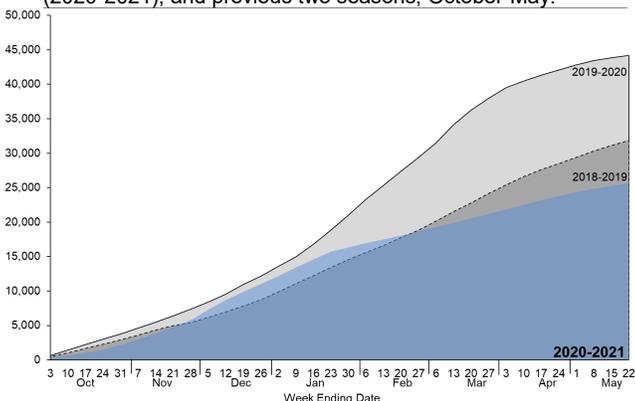


Figure 3. Cumulative number of specimens tested for influenza (by RT-PCR) as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2020-2021), and previous two seasons, October-May.



<sup>§</sup> Reported percentages represent final end of season data and may differ from previously published reports.

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

## 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 May 16-22, 2021, 50 of the 5,691 (<1%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness (**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 May 16-22, 2021, 171 of the 20,929 (<1%) 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 May 16-22, 2021, 0 of 59 zip codes had ILI activity levels that were moderate to high.

## Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [FluView](#)<sup>1</sup> 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](#)<sup>2</sup> and [Suburban Cook County](#)<sup>3</sup> 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](#)<sup>4</sup>.

## Reporting Information

Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)<sup>5</sup>. Contact [SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org](mailto:SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org) for more information.



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

Figure 3. Percent of medically-attended outpatient visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by ILINet facilities, Chicago, by week for the current season (2020-2021) and previous two seasons season, October-May.

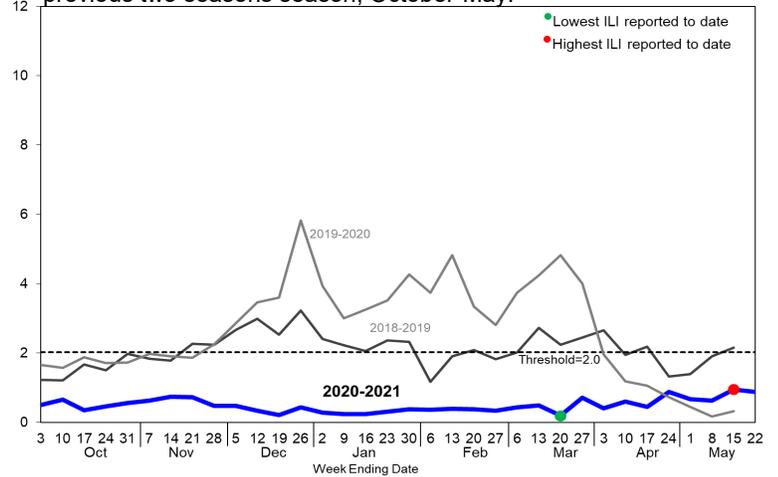


Figure 4. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2020-2021) and previous two seasons, October-May.

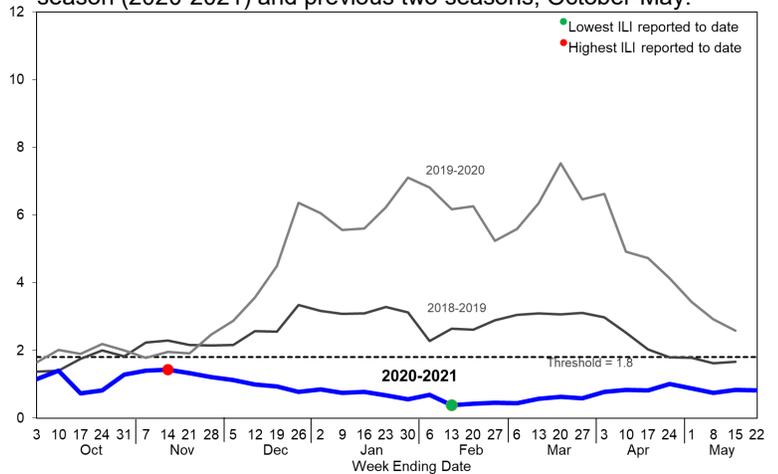
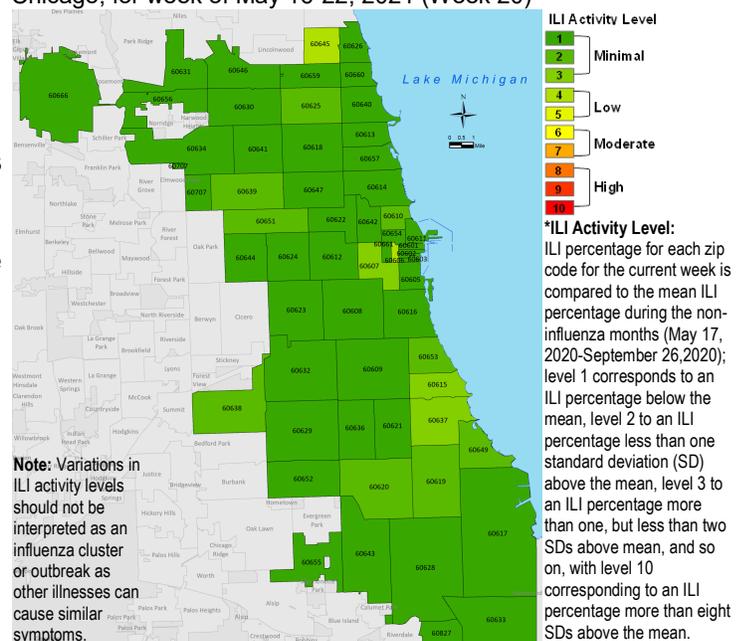


Figure 5. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of May 16-22, 2021 (Week 20)



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; <sup>2</sup> <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance>; <sup>3</sup> <https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/influenza/>;

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdp/supp\\_info/health-protection/current\\_flu\\_situationinchicago.html](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdp/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago.html); <sup>5</sup> <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>