



Chicago Flu Update



Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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News & Updates

This is the first *Chicago Flu Update* of the 2018-2019 influenza season. This report will be issued every Friday until May 2019. The Illinois Department of Public Health recently issued [Influenza Testing and Reporting Guidance](#)¹ which outlines influenza testing recommendations and reporting requirements. Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. 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 schedule of [City of Chicago influenza vaccination clinics](#)² 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.

What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection is low.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of September 30-October 6, 2018, two influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported; both were positive for influenza A (not subtyped) (**Figure 1**).

Influenza-associated ICU Hospitalizations

Since 2010-2011, 1,975 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported for Chicago residents (**Figure 2**). Last season (2017-2018) recorded the highest number of ICU hospitalizations since the 2009 pandemic and alone accounted for nearly 30% of all reported cases since 2010-2011. The 2017-2018 season was an influenza A (H3N2) predominant season and the highest rate of ICU hospitalizations were among those sixty-five years of age and older, which is similar to previous seasons. Last season also recorded the highest number of deaths (38) reported among ICU hospitalizations since 2010-2011. The Chicago Department of Public Health recently issued guidance on [reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations](#)³ stressing the importance of prompt and complete reporting.

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2018-2019) by influenza type and subtype, October-May.

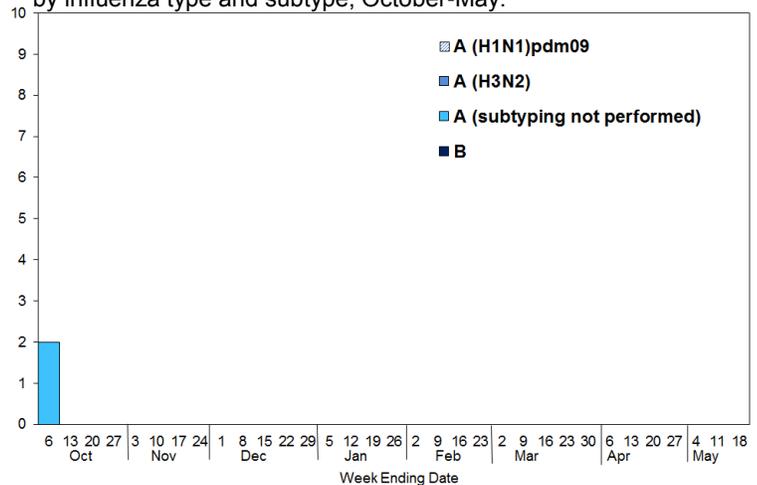


Figure 3. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2018-2019) October-May.

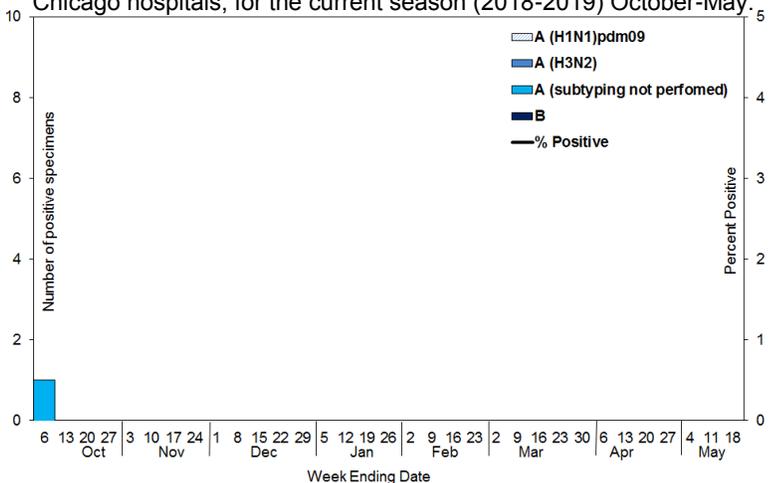
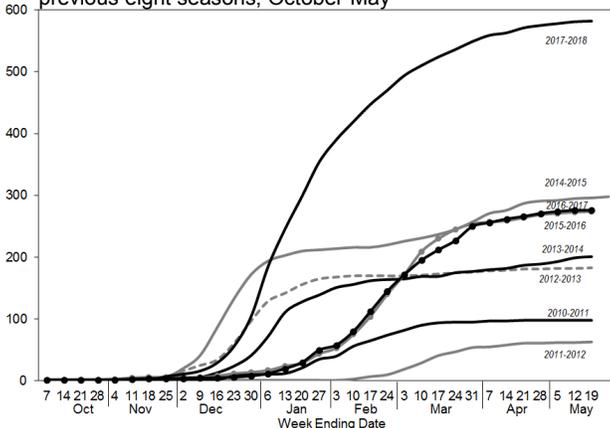


Figure 2. Cumulative number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the previous eight seasons, October-May



Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of September 30-October 6, 2018, with 5 laboratories reporting, 1 of the 454 (<1%) specimens tested for influenza was positive for influenza A (unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) (**Figure 3**).

¹ dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ohp-annual-flu-testing-guidance-09182018.pdf; ² <https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/health-protection/2018-influenza-walk-in-clinic-schedule.html>; ³ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41>

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 daily basis, covering every emergency department visit in the city. For the week of September 30-October 6, 2018, 335 of the 24,180 (1.4%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (ILI) (Figure 4).

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 September 30-October 6, 2018, with 21 facilities reporting, 1.2% of outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, this is slightly lower than Illinois excluding Chicago (0.7%), but similar to the U.S. (1.4%) and Region 5 (1.1%) (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 September 30-October 6, 2018, 10 of 59 (17%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories and 49 (83%) had ILI activity levels in the minimal to low categories

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FluView⁴ 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 Illinois⁵ and Suburban Cook County⁶ 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 Chicago⁷.

Reporting Information

Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)⁸. Contact SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org for more information.

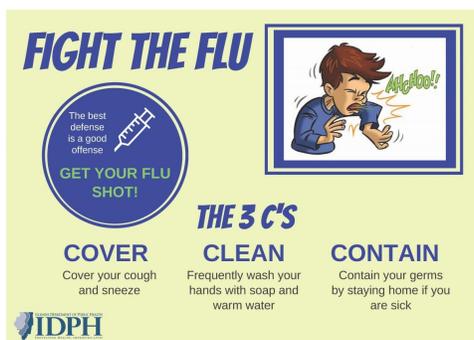


Figure 4. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2018-2019) and previous two seasons, October-May.

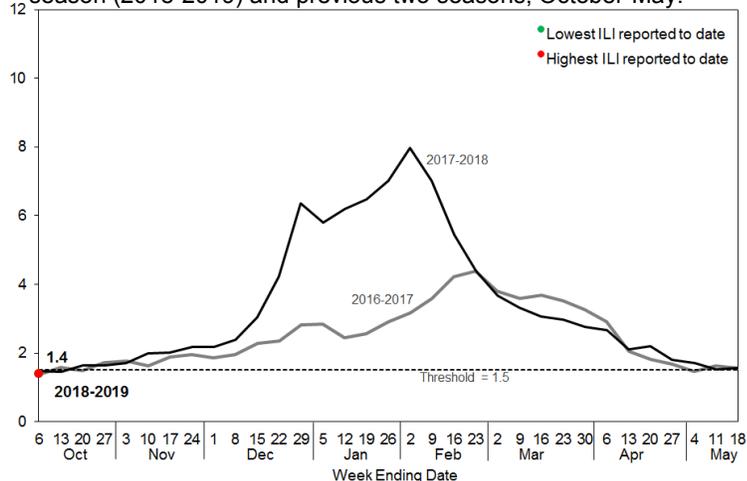


Figure 5. Percent of medically-attended outpatient visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by ILINet facilities, Chicago, by week for the current season (2018-2019) and for Illinois, Region 5, and U.S., October-May.

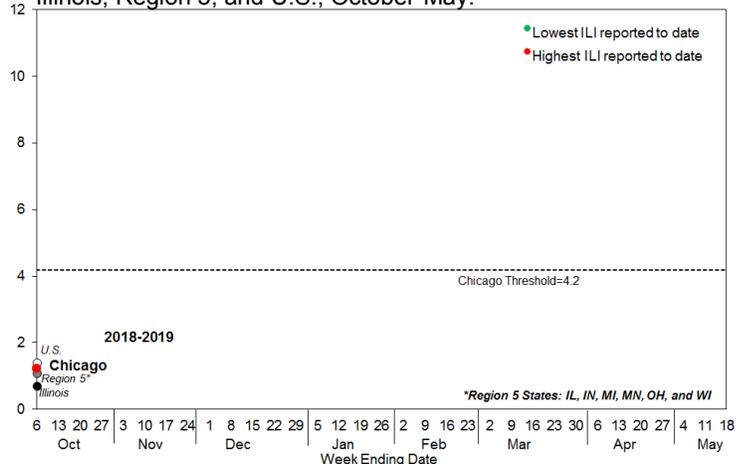
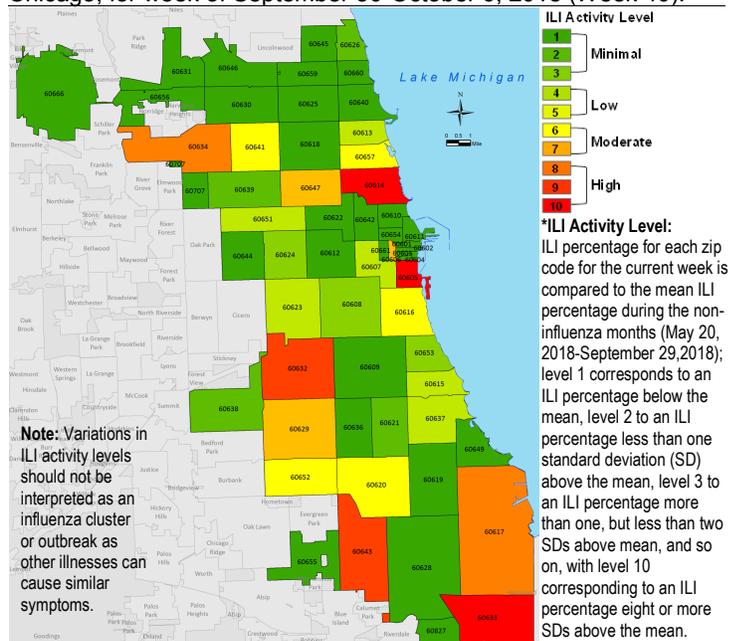


Figure 6. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of September 30-October 6, 2018 (Week 40).



⁴ <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ⁵ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/surveillance>; ⁶ <http://cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports/communicable-diseases>; ⁷ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html;

⁸ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>