



# Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago  
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

February 17, 2012  
[Previous Chicago Flu Updates](#)

Chicago Department of Public Health  
Bechara Choucair, MD, Commissioner

## What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection in the Chicago area is low, but a couple of indicators suggest a slight increase in risk. The percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza is at its highest level seen all season and two influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 6. However, compared to the same time period last season, the number of positive influenza specimens and the number of influenza-associated hospitalizations reported to CDPH remains substantially lower, with a greater than 90% decrease in both. Vaccination is the best way to protect against human seasonal influenza infection and all Chicagoans aged six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. Chicagoans should ask their health-care provider or pharmacist about vaccine availability. Uninsured individuals and those with insurance that does not cover flu shots can [obtain a voucher for a free flu shot at Walgreens](#)<sup>1</sup>. The Chicago Department of Public Health has influenza vaccine available at [CDPH immunization clinics](#)<sup>2</sup>.

## Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

Two influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 6 (February 5-11, 2012). Since October 2011, three influenza-associated ICU hospitalization have been reported. Suspected novel influenza, pediatric influenza-associated deaths, and influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations should all be reported to CDPH via [INEDSS](#)<sup>3</sup>. Outbreaks of influenza-like illness in a congregate setting are also reportable; in Chicago these reports can be made by phone to (312) 746-5911.

## How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

For the week of February 5-11, 2012, with 17 hospitals reporting, 4.2% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This is nearly three percentage points lower than levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2011 (Figure 1). From February 5-11, 2012, with 16 outpatient clinics reporting, 2.6% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is the fourth consecutive week that an increase has been noted (Figure 2).

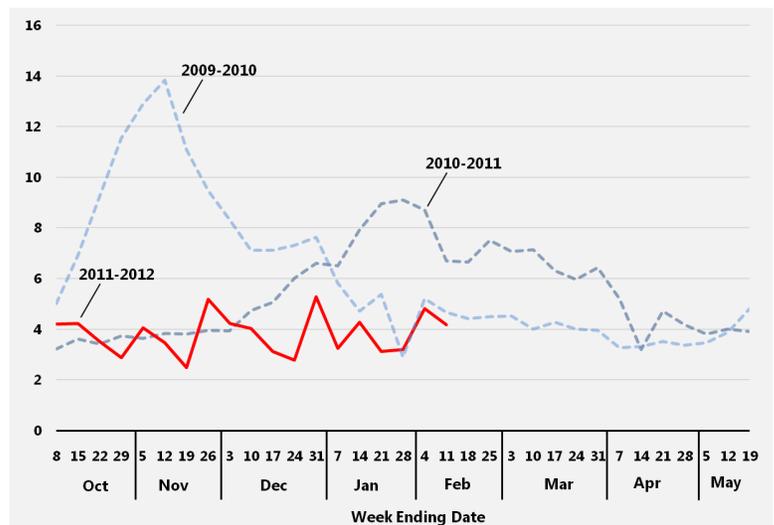
## Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of February 5-11, 2012, with 6 laboratories reporting, 8 of 240 (3.3%) specimens tested for influenza were positive, 4 typed as influenza A (3 H1N1, 1 H3N2), and 4 typed as influenza B. Since October 2011, 25 out of 3,095 (<1%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 18 typed as influenza A (9 H3N2, 6 H1N1, and 3 not subtyped) and 7 typed as influenza B.

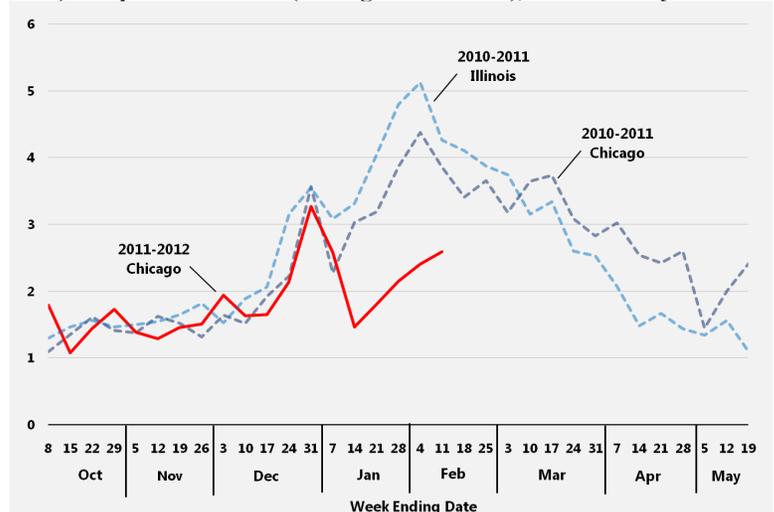
## Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Flu-View](#)<sup>4</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>5</sup> and [Suburban Cook County](#)<sup>6</sup> are also available online.

**Figure 1. Weekly reported percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous two seasons, October-May.**



**Figure 2. Weekly reported percent of outpatient clinic visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous season (Chicago and Illinois), October-May.**



<sup>1</sup><https://www.chicagohan.org/ViewsFlash/servlet/viewsflash?cmd=showform&pollid=Vouchers!Indiv>; <sup>2</sup>[http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/supp\\_info/infectious/immunizations\\_walk-inclinics.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/infectious/immunizations_walk-inclinics.html); <sup>3</sup><https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>; <sup>4</sup><http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; <sup>5</sup><http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/surveillance.htm>; <sup>6</sup><http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports#influenza>