



Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago

February 24, 2012

Chicago Department of Public Health

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

[Previous Chicago Flu Updates](#)

Bechara Choucair, MD, Commissioner

What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection in the Chicago is increasing. The percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza increased for the third consecutive week and three influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 7; all were adults over the age of 45 and positive for H1N1. 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 healthcare 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](#)¹. The Chicago Department of Public Health has influenza vaccine available at [CDPH immunization clinics](#)².

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

Three influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 7 (February 12-18, 2012). Since October 2011, six influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported. Suspected novel influenza, pediatric influenza-associated deaths, and influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations should all be reported to CDPH via [INEDSS](#)³. 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 12-18, 2012, with 16 hospitals reporting, 4.5% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This is two percentage points lower than levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2011 (Figure 1). From February 12-18, 2012, with 17 outpatient clinics reporting, 3.6% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is the fifth consecutive week that an increase has been noted and is similar to levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2011 (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 12-18, 2012, with 6 laboratories reporting, 15 of 258 (5.8%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. Although the highest percentage seen so far this season, this is still nearly three times lower than levels seen during the same surveillance week in 2011. Among the positive specimens, 11 typed as influenza A (6 H1N1, 3 H3N2, 2 untyped), and 4 typed as influenza B. Since October 2011, 40 out of 3,353 (1.2%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 29 typed as influenza A (12 H3N2, 12 H1N1, and 5 not subtyped) and 11 typed as influenza B.

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [FluView](#)⁴ 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](#)⁵ and [Suburban Cook County](#)⁶ 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.

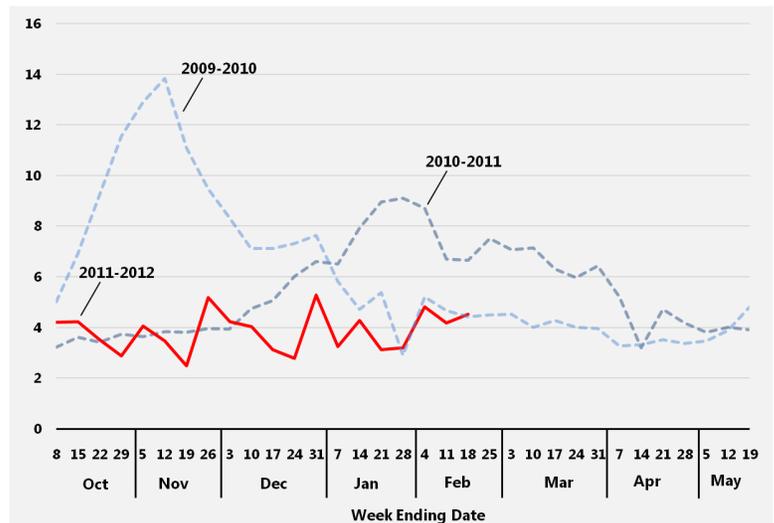
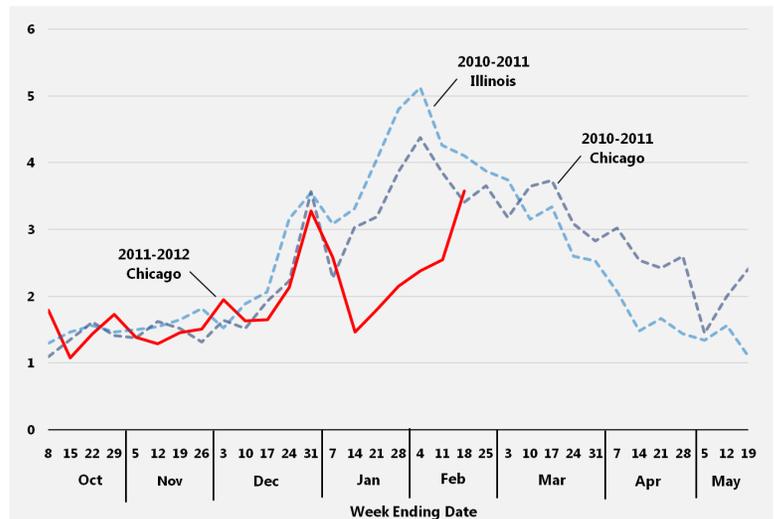


Figure 2. Weekly reported percent of outpatient clinic visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous season (Chicago and Illinois), October-May.



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