



Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

March 16, 2012

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Chicago Department of Public Health

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What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection in the Chicago area remains elevated. Influenza surveillance indicators are at some of it's highest levels seen all season. Still, the number of positive influenza specimens and the number of influenza-associated hospitalizations reported to CDPH remains substantially lower compared to the same time period last season (Table 1). 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?

Eight influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 10 (March 4-10, 2012). Since October 2011, 27 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported. Among all hospitalized ICU cases, 48% were 50 years of age or older (range: 0-91 years, median: 48 years), 33% had underlying lung disease (including asthma), and 37% were positive for influenza B by PCR. Of the 17 specimens that were positive for influenza A by PCR, 7 were subtyped as H1N1, 1 as H3N2 and 9 were untyped. One death has 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 call (312) 746-5911.

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

For the week of March 4-10, 2012, with 17 hospitals reporting, 9.0% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This is the highest level seen so far this season and is one of the highest levels reported during the last two influenza seasons (Figure 1). From March 4-10, 2012, with 16 outpatient clinics reporting, 6.9% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is 2.5 percentage points higher than the peak reported in the 2010-2011 influenza season.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of March 4-10, 2012, with 5 laboratories reporting, 72 of 368 (19.6%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. Among the positive specimens, 37 typed as influenza A (17 H1N1, 13 H3N2, 7 untyped), and 35 typed as influenza B. Since October 2011, 211 out of 4,436 (4.8%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 118 typed as influenza A (58 H1N1, 38 H3N2, and 22 not subtyped) and 93 typed as influenza B (Figure 2).

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Flu-View](#)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.

Table 1. Influenza testing results and ICU hospitalizations reported for surveillance weeks 40 through 10 by season, Chicago.

Influenza Season	# Specimens Tested*	# Specimens Positive	# ICU Hospitalizations
2010-2011	4,626	576	90
2011-2012	4,223	193	27
% Change	-8%	-66%	-70%

*5 Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping that have consistently reported results for both seasons.

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.

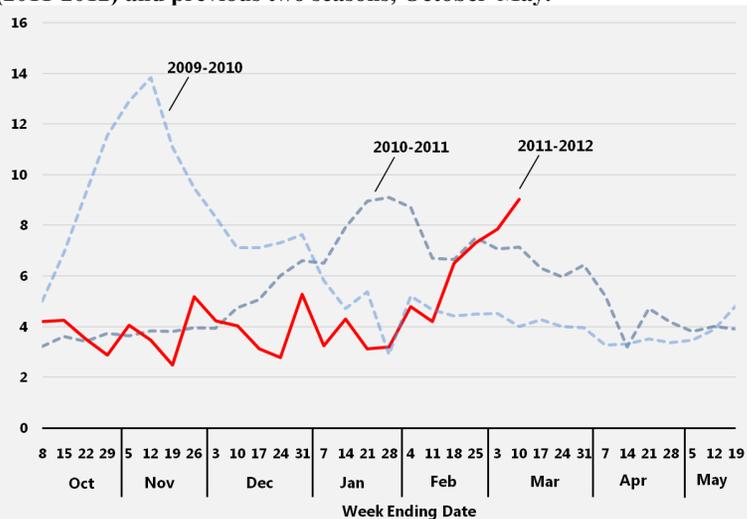
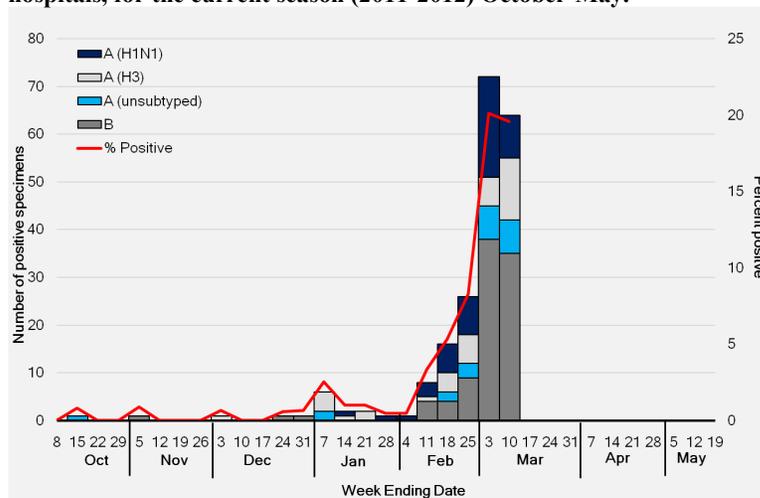


Figure 2. Percentage of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2011-2012) October-May.



¹<https://www.chicagohan.org/ViewsFlash/servlet/flash?cmd=showform&pollid=Vouchers!Indiv>; ²http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdp/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>