



Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

April 20, 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 continues to decline. The number of positive influenza specimens and the number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported to CDPH remain 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?

Two influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 15 (April 8-14, 2012). Since October 2011, 56 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported. Among all hospitalized ICU cases, 50% tested positive for influenza A (39% H1N1, 11% H3N2, and 50% un-subtyped) and 50% tested positive for influenza B. Over half (57%) were ≥ 50 years (median: 55 years, range: 4 months-107 years), 41% had underlying lung disease (including asthma) and 20% required ventilator support. One death was reported for week 15, bringing the total so far this season to three. This is a 73% decrease from the number of deaths reported among ICU hospitalizations last season. 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 April 8-14, 2012, with 18 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 half the level reached during the peak this season and the third consecutive week that a decrease has been noted (Figure 1). From April 8-14, 2012, with 14 outpatient clinics reporting, 4.9% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is half the level reached during the peak in mid-March.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of April 8-14, 2012, with 6 laboratories reporting, 24 of 238 (10.1%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. Among the positive specimens, 13 typed as influenza A (2 H1N1, 5 H3N2, 6 un-subtyped), and 11 typed as influenza B. There was a slight uptick in the proportion of specimens testing positive for influenza from the previous week. Since October 2011, 466 out of 6,028 (7.7%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 236 typed as influenza A (106 H1N1, 85 H3N2, and 45 not subtyped) and 230 typed as influenza B (Figure 2).

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.

Table 1. Influenza testing results and ICU hospitalizations reported for surveillance weeks 40 through 15 by season, Chicago.

Influenza Season	# Specimens Tested*	# Specimens Positive	# ICU Hospitalizations
2010-2011	5,939	668	97
2011-2012	5,633	404	56
% Change	-5%	-39%	-42%

*Five 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.

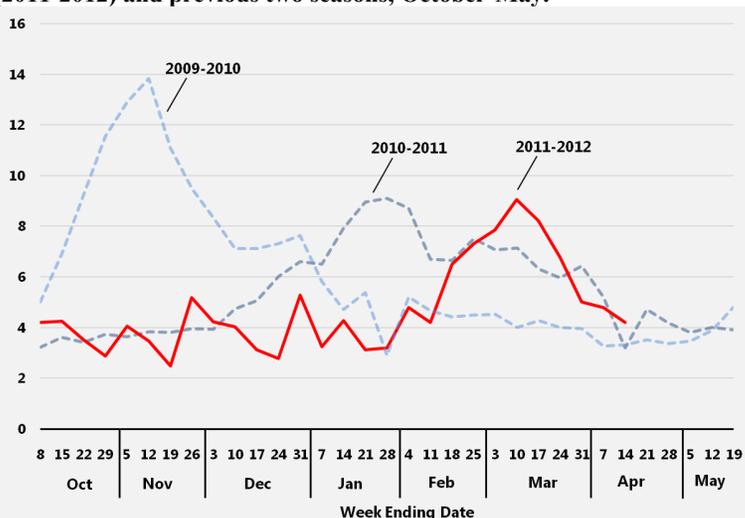
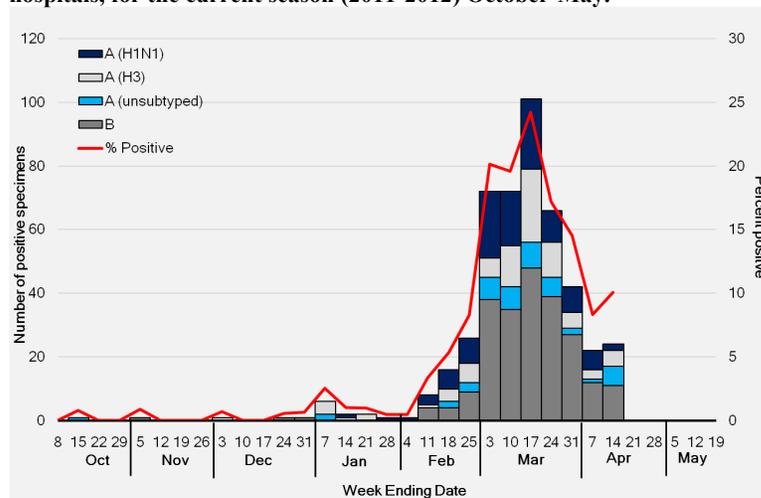


Figure 2. Percentage of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2011-2012) October-May.



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>