



# Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago

May 25, 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 area is low. This will be the last *Chicago Flu Update* issued for this influenza season. The next update will be issued in October 2012. The Chicago Department of Public Health will continue to monitor surveillance indicators throughout the summer months. Overall, the number of positive influenza specimens and the number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported to CDPH were lower compared to the previous influenza 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. The Chicago Department of Public Health has influenza vaccine available at [CDPH immunization clinics](#)<sup>1</sup>.

## Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

One influenza-associated ICU hospitalization was reported for week 20 (May 13-19, 2012). Since October 2011, 63 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported. The highest proportion of cases was reported in patients 50 years of age or older (median: 56 years, range: 4 months-107 years). Thirty-one cases tested positive for influenza A (35% H1N1, 13% H3N2, and 52% untyped) and 32 tested positive for influenza B. Lung disease (including asthma), heart disease, and diabetes were the three most frequently reported underlying medical conditions. Hispanics and non-Hispanic blacks accounted for the majority of reported ICU hospitalizations (33% and 45% respectively). No deaths were reported for week 20. A total of seven deaths were reported this season, a decrease of 36% from the previous season when 11 deaths were reported. Suspected novel influenza, pediatric influenza-associated deaths, and influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations should all be reported to CDPH via [INEDSS](#)<sup>2</sup>. 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 May 13-19, 2012, with 16 hospitals reporting, 3.1% of emergency room (ER) visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This season ER ILI peaked in early March, nearly six weeks later than the previous season (Figure 1). From May 13-19, 2012, with 26 outpatient clinics reporting, 3% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI, remaining unchanged for the past three weeks. Outpatient ILI peaked in mid-March, seven weeks later than the previous season and three percentage points higher.

## Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of May 13-19, 2012, with 6 laboratories reporting, 4 of 168 (2.4%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. This is the fourth consecutive week that a decrease has been noted. Among the positive specimens, 1 typed as influenza A (unsubtyped) and 3 typed as influenza B. Since October 2011, 522 out of 6,996 (7.5%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 261 typed as influenza A (115 H1N1, 97 H3N2, and 49 not subtyped) and 261 typed as influenza B (Figure 2).

## Where can I get more information?

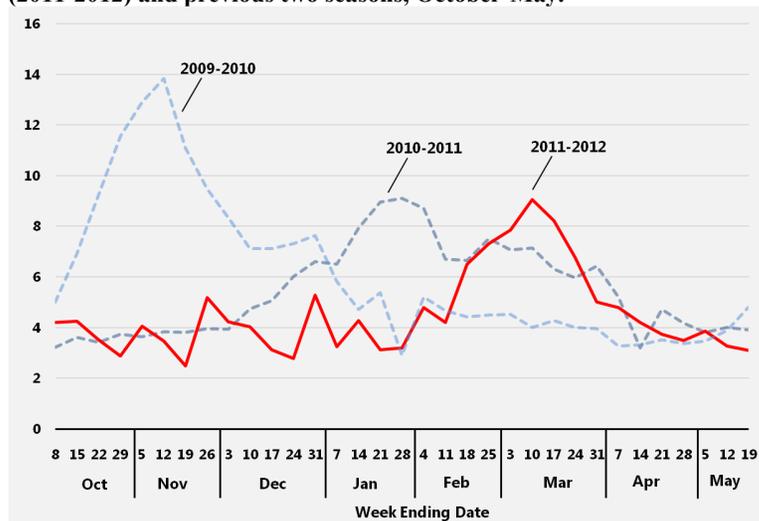
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [FluView](#)<sup>3</sup> report provides national updates and trends related to the intensity of influenza activity across the United States, as well as detailed information on antiviral resistance, severity of illness, and other topics. Updates specific to [Illinois](#)<sup>4</sup> and [Suburban Cook County](#)<sup>5</sup> are also available online.

**Table 1. Influenza testing results and ICU hospitalizations reported for surveillance weeks 40 through 20 by season, Chicago.**

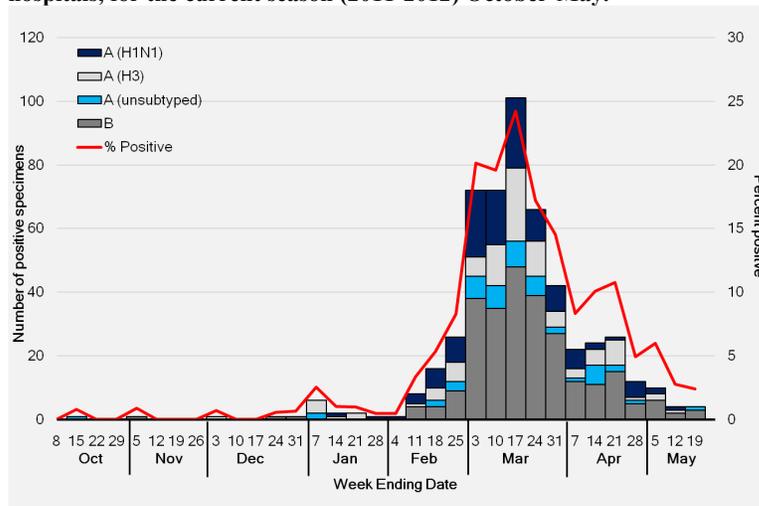
Influenza Season	# Specimens Tested*	# Specimens Positive	# ICU Hospitalizations
2010-2011	6,758	678	98
2011-2012	6,490	450	63
<b>% Change</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-34%</b>	<b>-36%</b>

\*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.**



<sup>1</sup>[http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdp/supp\\_info/infectious/immunizations\\_walk-in-clinics.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdp/supp_info/infectious/immunizations_walk-in-clinics.html); <sup>2</sup><https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>; <sup>3</sup><http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; <sup>4</sup><http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/surveillance.htm>; <sup>5</sup><http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports#influenza>