



Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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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 is low. Since October 2011, less than two percent of the 27,964 specimens tested for influenza at collaborating laboratories across the U.S. have been positive, with 87% of these being influenza A (42% of influenza A viruses subtyped as H3N2). CDC has characterized 129 influenza viruses so far this season, with the following results: 14 A (H1N1), 104 A (H3N2), and 11 B viruses. All of the H1N1 viruses and 99% of the H3N2 viruses were similar to components found in the 2011-2012 influenza vaccine for the Northern Hemisphere. Since October 2011, all viruses tested for antiviral resistance have been susceptible to the antiviral medications oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®). 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?

No influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 52 (December 25-31, 2011). Since October 2011, one influenza-associated ICU hospitalization 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 these reports can be made by phone to (312) 746-5911.

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

For the week of December 25-31, 2011, with 17 hospitals reporting, 5.3% 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 reported so far this season and represents a nearly three percentage point increase from the previous week (Figure 1). From December 25-31, 2011, with 16 outpatient clinics reporting, 3.4% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is the highest level reported so far this season and is similar to levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2010 (Figure 2).

Which influenza strains are circulating?

For the week of December 25-31, 2011, with 5 Chicago-area laboratories reporting, 1 of 153 specimens tested for influenza was positive, typed as influenza B. Since October 2011, 5 out of 1,778 specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 2 typed as influenza A (1 H3 and 1 not subtyped) and 3 typed as influenza B.

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.

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.

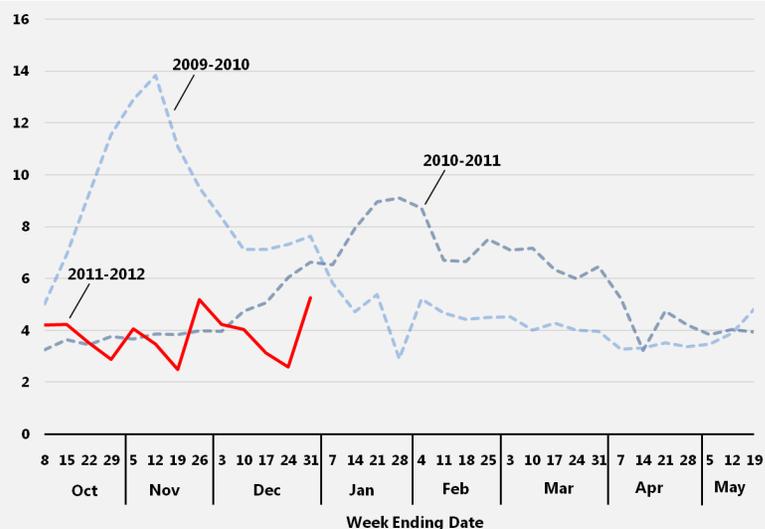
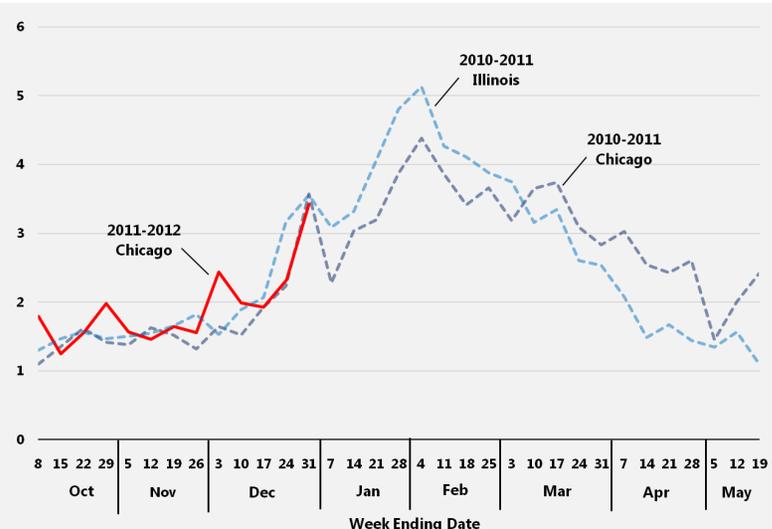


Figure 2. Weekly reported percent of outpatient clinic visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous season (Chicago and Illinois), October-May.



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>