



Chicago Flu Update



Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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News & Updates

The CDC has released [early season influenza vaccine coverage estimates](#)¹ and report that approximately three out of five people in the U.S. have not yet been vaccinated this flu season and that vaccination among pregnant women is low (36%). CDC and CDPH encourage healthcare providers to routinely assess, strongly recommend, and offer flu vaccinations to all of their patients 6 months and older.

Vaccination is the best way to protect against 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. For those without a healthcare provider or whose healthcare providers do not have the influenza vaccine, a schedule of [City of Chicago influenza vaccination clinics](#)² is available on the City website and by calling 311. To locate the closest City of Chicago clinic or retail pharmacy, visit www.chicagoflushots.org.

What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection is low.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of November 26-December 2, 2017, two influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported. (Figure 1).

Since October 1, 2017, nine influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; seven were positive for influenza A (5 H3N2 and 2 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and two were positive for influenza B.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of November 26-December 2, 2017, with 6 laboratories reporting, 17 of the 583 (2.9%) specimens tested for influenza were positive (8 A H3N2, 6 A unknown subtype and 3 influenza B) (Figure 2).

Since October 1, 2017, 53 of 4,887 (1.1%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 47 typed as influenza A (32 H3N2, 15 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and six typed as influenza B.

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

CDPH receives data from several hospitals in Chicago that provide emergent care, which report on a weekly basis the total number of emergency department visits, and of those visits, the number with influenza-like illness (*fever of 100°F or greater and cough and/or sore throat*).

For the week of November 26-December 2, 2017, with seven hospitals reporting, 2.6% of emergency department visits were due to ILI (Figure 3).

In addition to emergency departments, several outpatient clinics throughout Chicago participate in CDC's Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) by also reporting on a weekly basis the total number of outpatient clinic visits, and of those visits, the number with influenza-like illness (ILI). For the week of November 26-December 2, 2017, with 22 facilities reporting, 2.6% of outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness (Figure 4).

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2017-2018) and previous season, October-May.

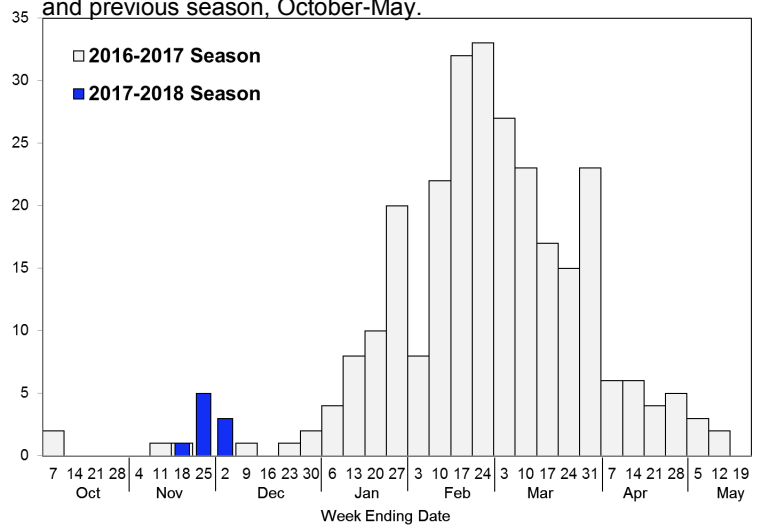
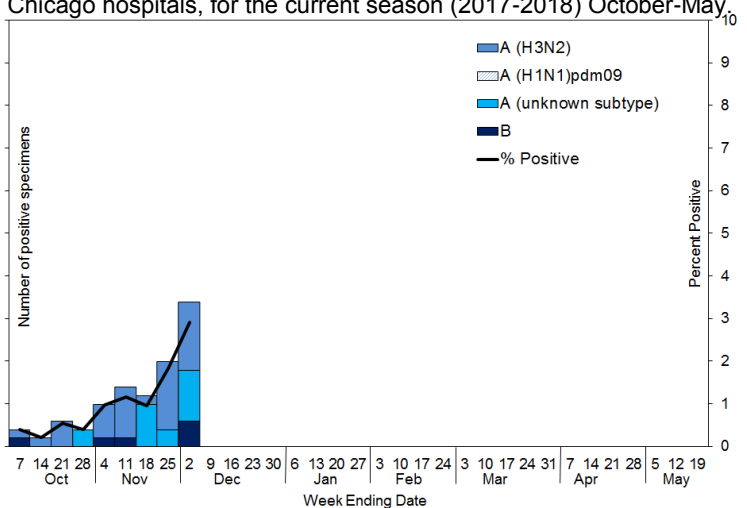


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2017-2018) October-May.



All data are preliminary and may change as more reports are received.

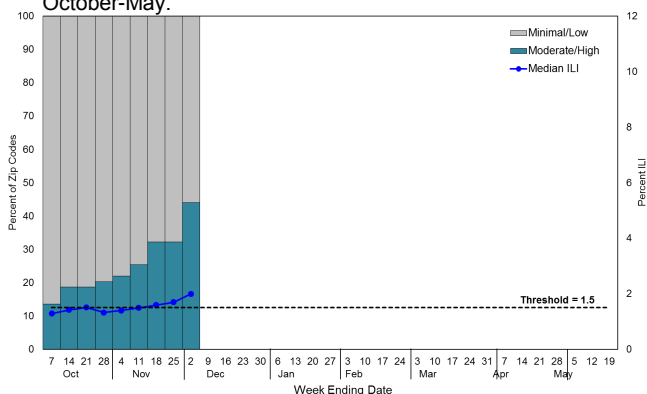
¹<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/1718season.htm>; ²https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/2017-influenza-walk-in-clinic-schedule.html

ESSENCE is an electronic syndromic surveillance system used to monitor influenza-like illness by utilizing the chief complaints of patients visiting emergency departments. Currently, all Chicago hospitals submit data to ESSENCE on a daily basis, covering every emergency department visit in the city.

For the week of November 26-December 2, 2017, 566 of the 25,333 (2.2%) emergency department visits among the 59 Chicago zip codes analyzed were due to influenza-like illness (ILI). Among age groups, children under five years of age had the highest percentage of visits due to influenza-like illness at 9.8%, followed by those 5-17 years of age at 3.7%; those 18-44, 45-64, and 65 and older were at 1.4% or less.

Figure 5 represents the percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza-like illness aggregated by patient zip code. For the week of November 26-December 2, 2017, 33 of 59 (56%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the minimal to low categories and 26 (44%) had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories; the median percent ILI was 2.0% with a range from <1% to 18% (**Figure 6**).

Figure 6. Percent of zip codes with minimal/low and moderate/high ILI activity levels and overall median ILI, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2017-2018), October-May.



Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's **FluView**³ 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**⁴ and **Suburban Cook County**⁵ are also available online. Current and archived issues of the *Chicago Flu Update* can be found on the CDPH website section **Current Flu Situation in Chicago**⁶.

Reporting Information

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued **influenza testing and reporting recommendations**⁷ healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS).⁸



Figure 3. Percent of **emergency department** visits attributed to influenza-like illness based on manual reports by individual hospitals, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2017-2018) and previous three seasons, October-May.

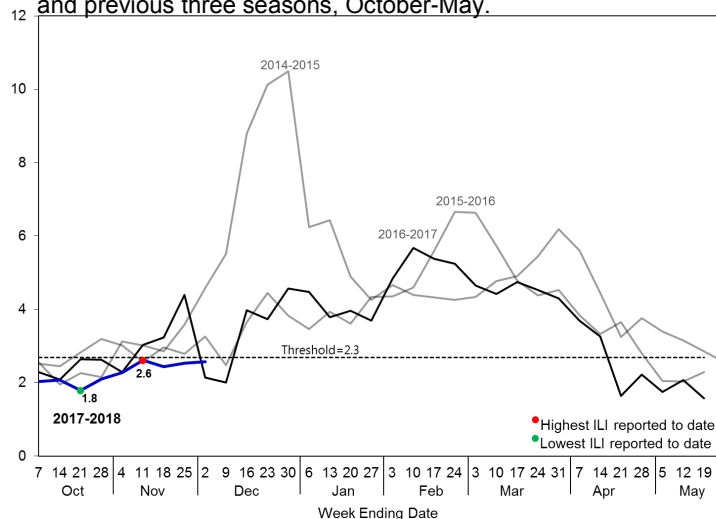


Figure 4. Percent of medically-attended **outpatient** visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by ILINet facilities, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2017-2018) and previous three seasons, October-May.

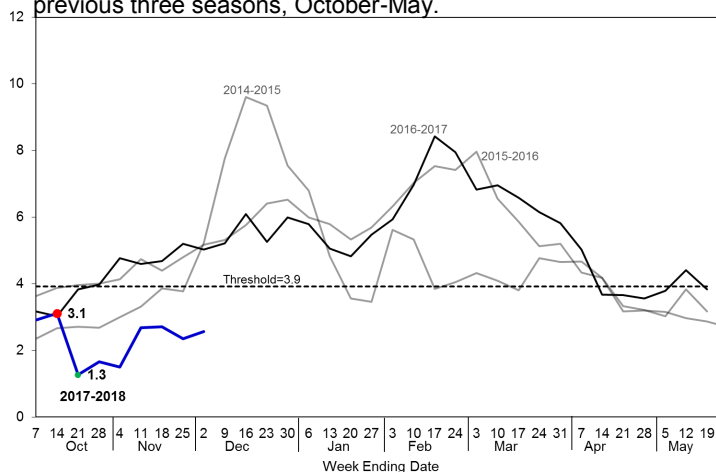
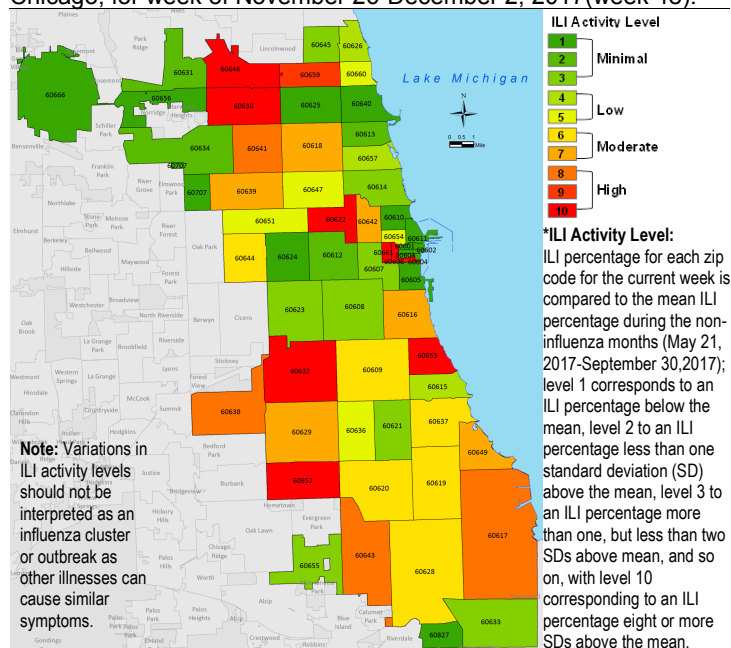


Figure 5. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to **ESSENCE**, Chicago, for week of November 26-December 2, 2017 (week 48).



³ <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ⁴ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/surveillance>; ⁵ <http://cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports/communicable-diseases>; ⁶ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html; ⁷ <http://dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/publications-ohp-annual-flu-testing-guidance-10132017.pdf>; ⁸ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>