



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. To date, 2.3% of the 63,470 specimens tested for influenza at collaborating laboratories across the U.S. have been positive, with 85% of these being influenza A (57% subtyped as A (H3)). Laboratories located in HHS Region 5 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI) have reported a slightly higher proportion (4.9%) of positive specimens, with 91% of these being influenza A (91% subtyped as A (H3)). Since October 2011, CDC has characterized 217 influenza viruses. Nearly all (98%) of the influenza A viruses and half of the influenza B viruses characterized were similar to components in the 2011-2012 Northern Hemisphere influenza vaccine. 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 3 (January 15-21, 2012). 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 January 15-21, 2012, with 15 hospitals reporting, 3.1% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This is lower than levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2011 (Figure 1). From January 15-21, 2012, with 16 outpatient clinics reporting, 2.1% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is one percentage point lower than levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2011 (Figure 2).

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of January 15-21, 2012, with 6 laboratories reporting, 2 of 204 specimens tested for influenza were positive, both subtyped as human influenza A (H3N2). Since October 2011, 15 out of 2,419 (<1%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 12 typed as influenza A (8 H3N2, 1 H1N1, and 3 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.

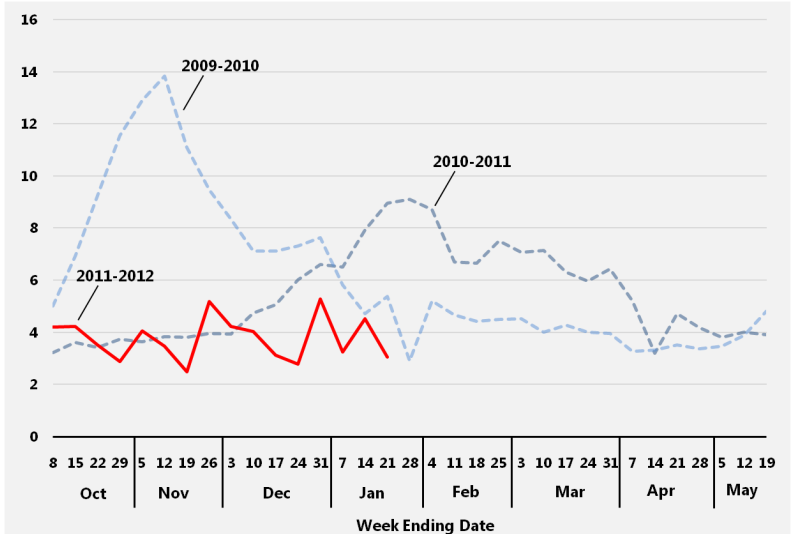
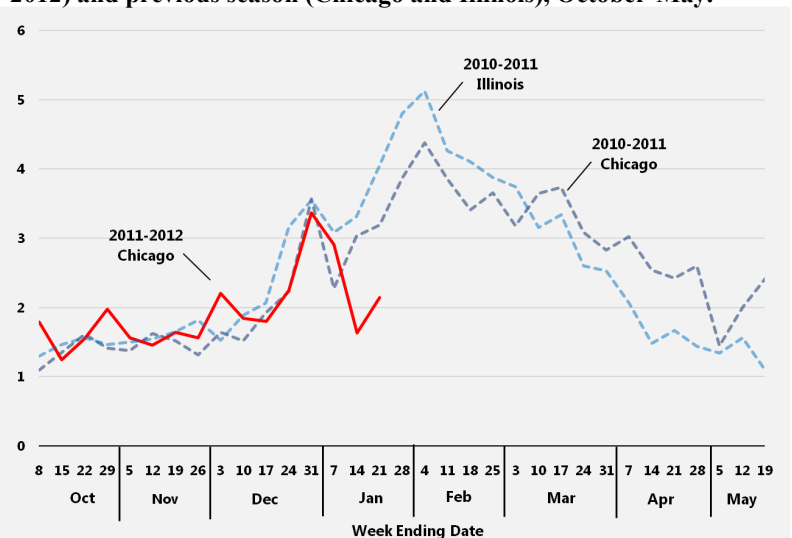


Figure 2. Weekly reported percent of outpatient clinic visits attributed to influenza-like illness, Chicago, by week, for current season (2011-2012) and previous season (Chicago and Illinois), October-May.



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>