



Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

April 13, 2012

[Previous Chicago Flu Updates](#)

Chicago Department of Public Health

Bechara Choucair, MD, Commissioner

What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection in the Chicago area continues to decline. Influenza surveillance indicators have peaked nearly two months later this season (March) compared to the previous season (January). 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?

No influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported for week 14 (April 1-7, 2012). Since October 2011, 54 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported. Among all hospitalized ICU cases, 50% tested positive for influenza A (20% H1N1, 4% H3N2, and 26% untyped) and 50% tested positive for influenza B. Over half (56%) were ≥ 50 years (median: 55 years, range: 4 months-96 years), 39% had underlying lung disease (including asthma) and 20% required ventilator support. Two deaths were reported including one in a previously reported case. 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 1-7, 2012, with 16 hospitals reporting, 4.6% of emergency room visits were due to ILI (i.e., fever of 100°F or greater, with cough or sore throat). This is 4.5 percentage points lower than the peak reached this season (Figure 1). From April 1-7, 2012, with 14 outpatient clinics reporting, 4.7% of outpatient clinic visits were due to ILI. This is two percentage points lower than levels reported during the same surveillance week in 2011 and at half the level reached during the peak this season.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of April 1-7, 2012, with 6 laboratories reporting, 22 of 264 (8.3%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. Among the positive specimens, 10 typed as influenza A (6 H1N1, 3 H3N2, 1 untyped), and 12 typed as influenza B. This is the third consecutive surveillance week that the proportion of specimens testing positive for influenza B has been higher than for influenza A. Since October 2011, 442 out of 5,790 (7.6%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive, with 223 typed as influenza A (104 H1N1, 80 H3N2, and 39 not subtyped) and 219 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 14 by season, Chicago.

Influenza Season	# Specimens Tested*	# Specimens Positive	# ICU Hospitalizations
2010-2011	5,748	662	97
2011-2012	5,419	384	54
% Change	-6%	-42%	-44%

*5 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.

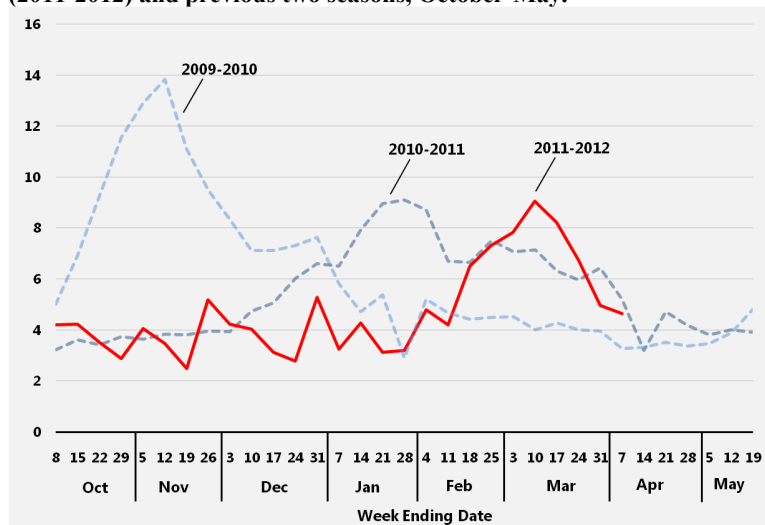
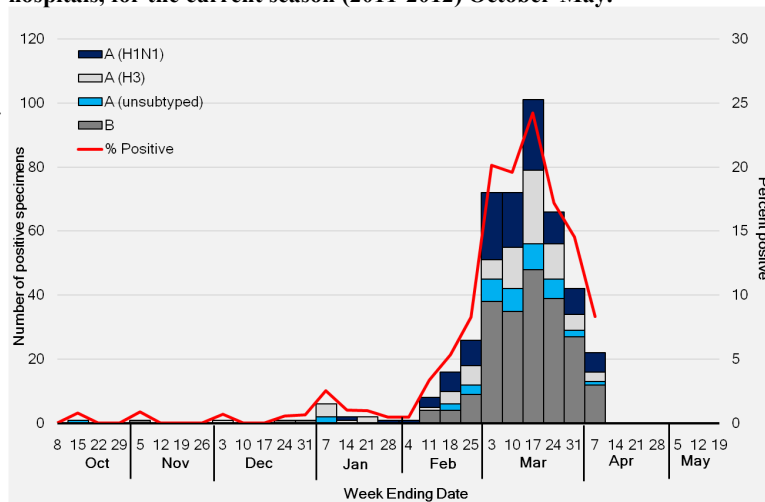


Figure 2. Percentage of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2011-2012) October-May.



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>