



Chicago Flu Update



Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

March 5, 2021

Allison Arwady, MD, MPH, Commissioner

News & Updates

The Illinois Department of Public Health recently issued [Influenza Testing and Reporting Guidance](#)¹ which outlines influenza testing recommendations and reporting requirements.

Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. Chicagoans should ask their healthcare provider or pharmacist about vaccine availability. Uninsured or underinsured adults and children 0-18 years old who are uninsured, underinsured, or Medicaid (Title XIX) insured can visit a CDPH [Walk-in Immunization Clinic](#)² to receive the flu vaccine; currently, two CDPH walk-in clinics have resumed immunization services. To locate the closest City of Chicago clinic or retail pharmacy, go to www.chicagoflushots.org. Visit <https://www.chicago.gov/flu> for more information on influenza.

What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection is low.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of February 21-27, 2021, no influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported (**Figure 1**).

Since September 27, 2020, one influenza-associated ICU hospitalization has been reported.

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of February 21-27, 2021, 0 of the 613 reported specimens tested for influenza were positive (**Figure 2**).

Since September 27, 2020, 4 of the 18,661 reported specimens that were tested for influenza have been positive. The cumulative percent of specimens testing positive for influenza is lower than previous seasons for the same time period. The number of reported specimens tested for influenza is 32% lower compared to the same time period last season (**Figure 3**).[§]

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2020-2021) and previous season (2019-2020), October-May.

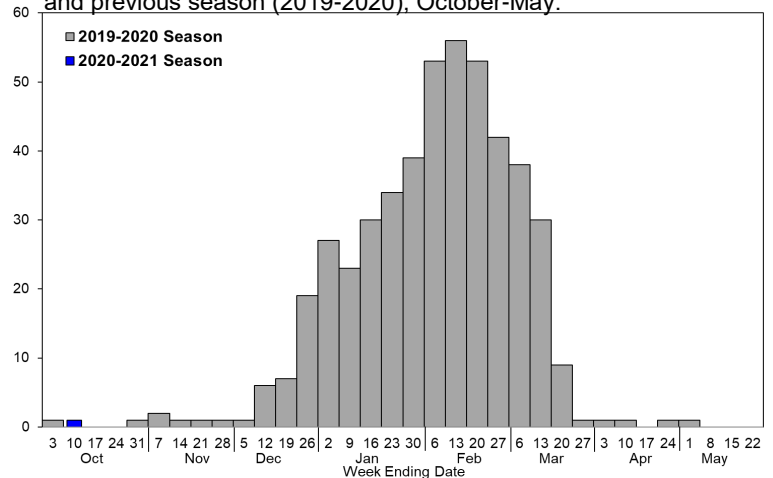


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2020-2021) October-May.

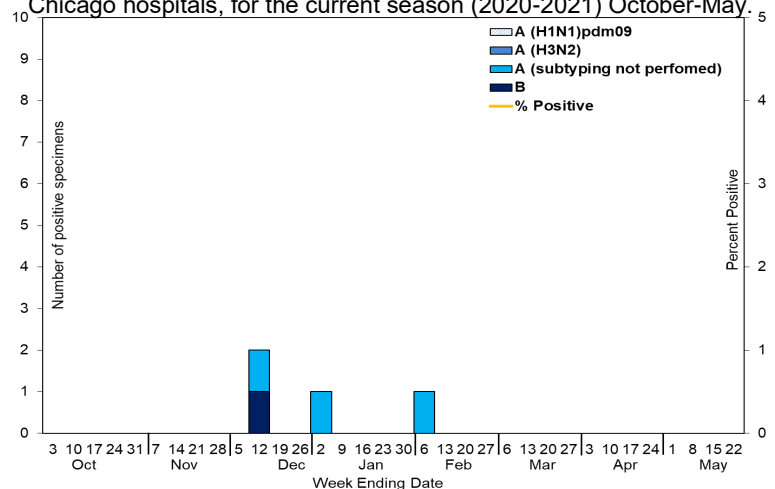
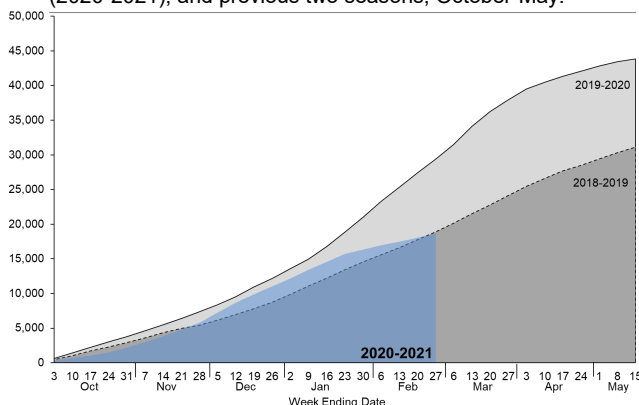


Figure 3. Cumulative number of specimens tested for influenza (by RT-PCR) as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2020-2021), and previous two seasons, October-May.



§ Reported percentages represent final end of season data and may differ from previously published reports.

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

¹ <https://dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020-2021-ohp-annual-flu-testing-guidance-1072020.pdf>,
² https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/immunizations_walk-inclinics.html

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

Several outpatient clinics throughout Chicago participate in CDC's Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) by 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 February 21-27, 2021, 22 of the 6,426 (<1%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness (**Figure 3**).

In addition to ILINet, ESSENCE is an electronic syndromic surveillance system that utilizes the chief complaints of patients visiting emergency departments to monitor for influenza-like illness. Currently, ESSENCE captures nearly every emergency department visit in the city on a daily basis. For the week of February 21-27, 2021, 78 of the 17,044 (<1%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (**Figure 4**).

Figure 5 represents the percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza-like illness aggregated by patient zip code. For the week of February 21-27, 2021, 0 of 59 zip codes had ILI activity levels that were moderate to high.

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

Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System ([INEDSS](#))⁷. Contact SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org for more information.



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

Figure 3. Percent of medically-attended outpatient visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by ILINet facilities, Chicago, by week for the current season (2020-2021) and previous two seasons season, October-May.

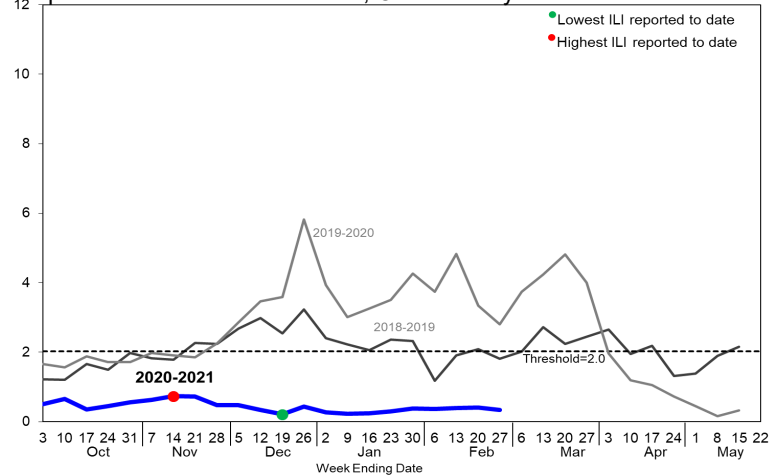


Figure 4. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2020-2021) and previous two seasons, October-May.

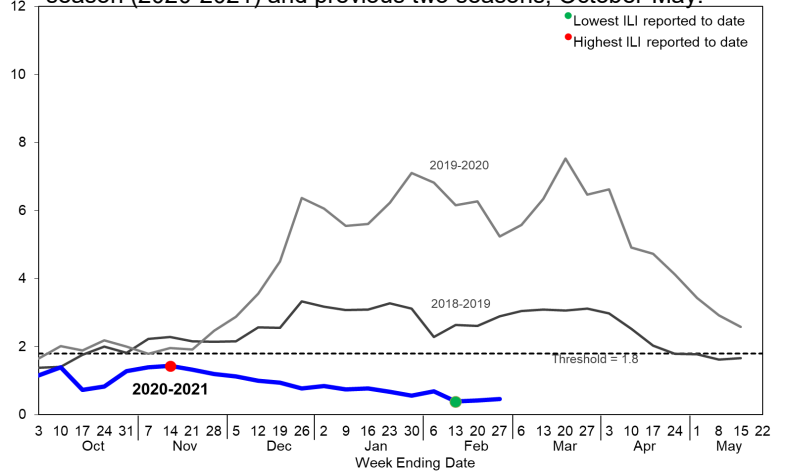
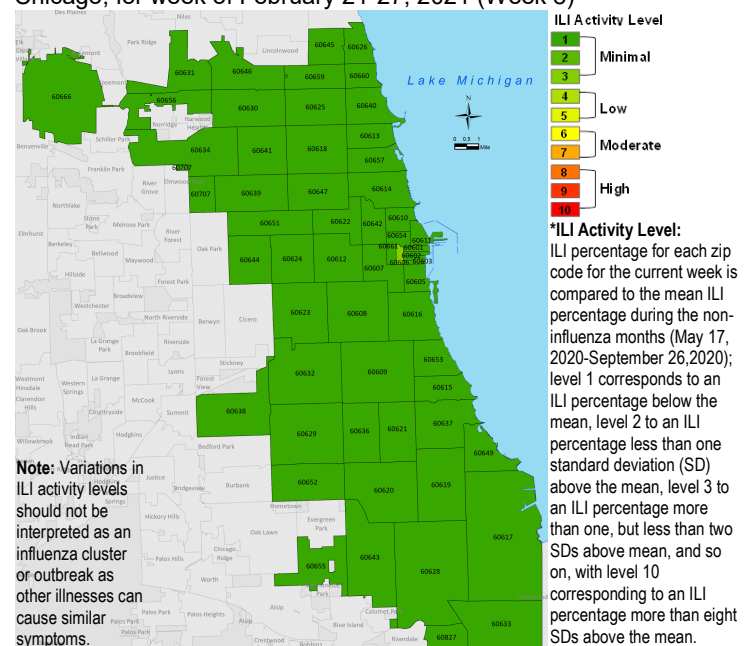


Figure 5. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of February 21-27, 2021 (Week 8)



³ <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; ⁴ <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance>; ⁵ <https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/influenza/>;

⁶ https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdp/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago.html; ⁷ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>