



Chicago Flu Update



Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

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News & Updates

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. 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](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdpd/supp_info/health-protection/2018-influenza-walk-in-clinic-schedule.html)¹ is available on the city website and by calling 311. To locate the closest City of Chicago clinic or retail pharmacy, go to 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 October 14-20, 2018, no influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported. Since September 30, 2018, three influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported; all were positive for influenza A by rapid test (not subtyped) (**Figure 1**).

Influenza A Subtyping

During previous influenza seasons, over half of all influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations that were positive for influenza A were subtyped (e.g. H3N2, H1N1pdm09). During the 2017-2018 season, this percentage decreased to less than 40% (**Figure 3**). For severe cases of influenza requiring ICU hospitalization, it is important, for surveillance purposes, to characterize the subtype of influenza A viruses that are contributing to severe disease. These data are used to monitor any changes in the epidemiology of high risk groups and to detect possible un-subtypable influenza A viruses, which may indicate a novel strain.

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2018-2019) by influenza type and subtype, October-May.

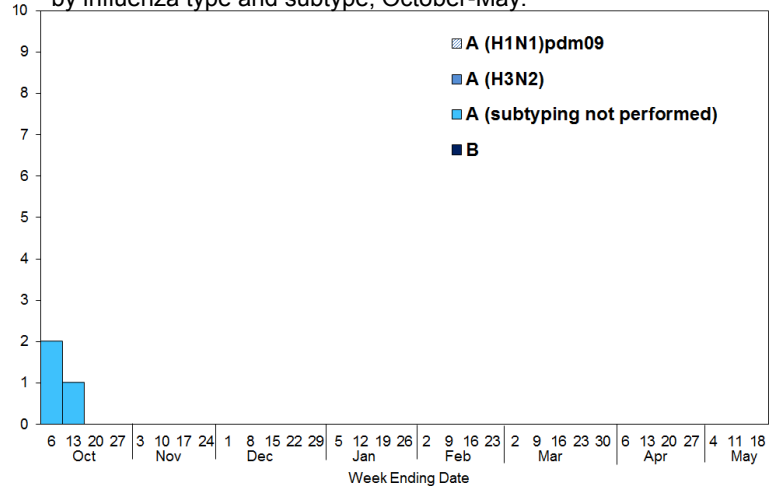


Figure 2. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2018-2019) October-May.

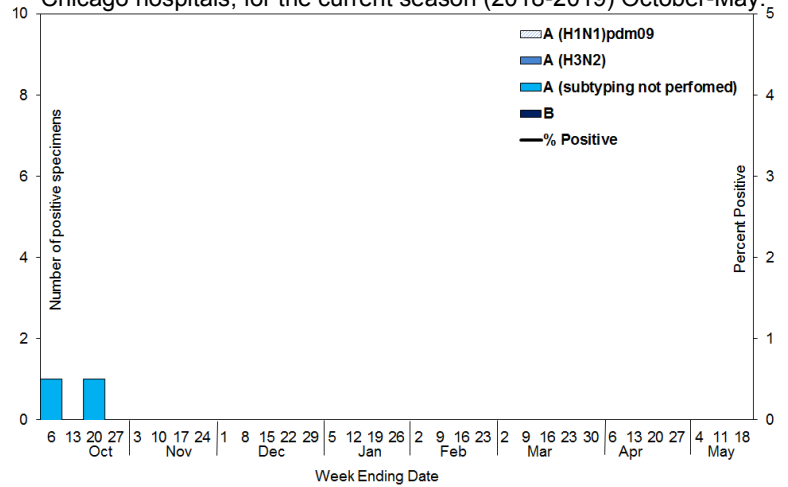
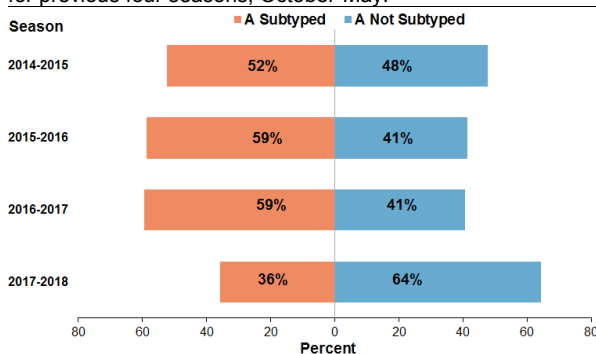


Figure 3. Percent of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations positive for influenza A, subtyped and not subtyped, Chicago, for previous four seasons, October-May.



Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of October 14-20, 2018, with 6 laboratories reporting, 1 of the 644 specimens tested for influenza was positive for influenza A (unknown subtype) (**Figure 2**).

Since September 30, 2018, 2 of 1,646 (<1%) specimens tested for influenza has been positive for influenza A (unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]).



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

¹ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdpd/supp_info/health-protection/2018-influenza-walk-in-clinic-schedule.html; ² <http://chicagoflushots.org/>

How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

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 October 14-20, 2018 406 of the 23,047 (1.8%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (ILI) (Figure 4).

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 October 14-20, 2018, with 21 facilities reporting, 1.7% of outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is slightly higher than Illinois (1.0%), to the U.S. (1.5%) and to Region 5 (1.1%) (Figure 5).

Figure 6 represents the percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza-like illness aggregated by patient zip code. For the week of October 14-20, 2018, 17 of 59 (29%) zip codes had ILI activity levels in the moderate to high categories and 42 (71%) had ILI activity levels in the minimal to low categories.

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FluView³ 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 Illinois⁴ and Suburban Cook County⁵ 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 Chicago⁶.

Reporting Information

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued influenza testing and reporting recommendations⁷. In addition, The Chicago Department of Public Health recently issued guidance on reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations⁸. Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)⁹. Contact SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org for more information.

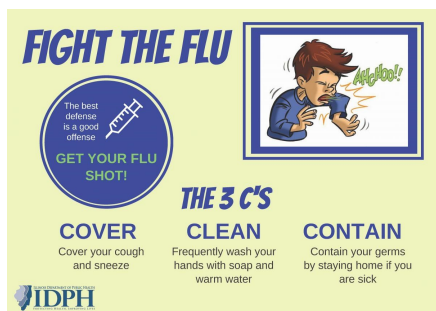


Figure 4. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2018-2019) and previous two seasons, October-May.

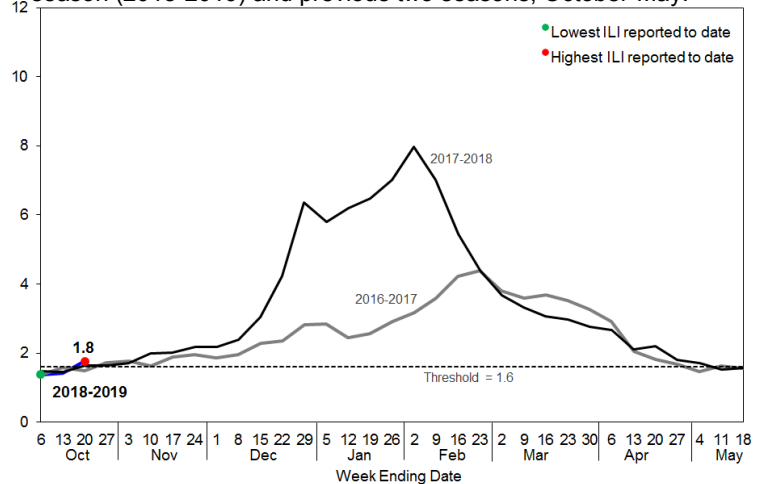


Figure 5. Percent of medically-attended outpatient visits attributed to influenza-like illness as reported by ILINet facilities, Chicago, by week for the current season (2018-2019) and for Illinois, Region 5, and U.S., October-May.

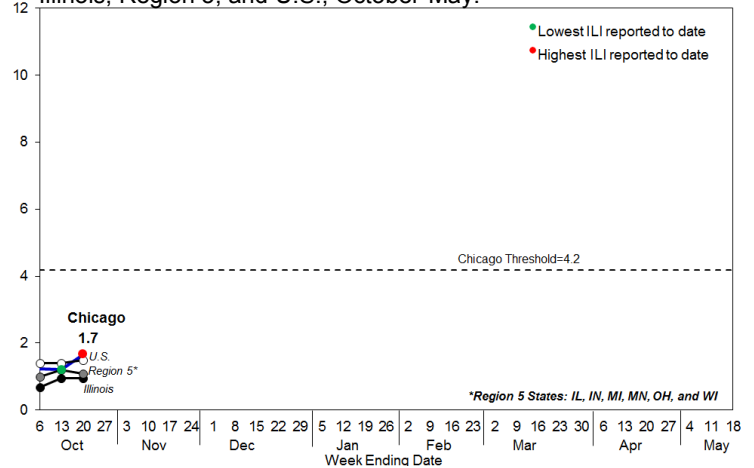
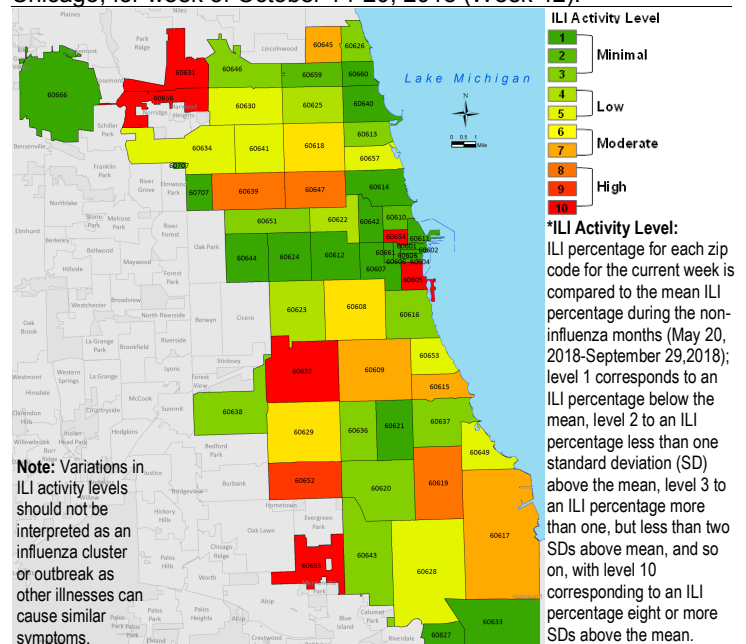


Figure 6. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, for week of October 14-20, 2018 (Week 42).



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/cdp/h/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html; ⁷ dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ohp-annual-flu-testing-guidance-09182018.pdf; ⁸ <https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41>; ⁹ <https://dph.partner.illinois.gov/>