



# Chicago Flu Update



City of Chicago  
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

March 13, 2015

Chicago Department of Public Health  
Julie Morita, MD, Acting Commissioner

## What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection remains elevated, but continues to decrease. Influenza B has been the predominant strain detected during the past several weeks, accounting for nearly fifty percent or higher of the total positive specimens that are tested for influenza. Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza infection and all Chicagoans aged six months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated. It is not too late to give or get an influenza vaccine. 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 list of [City of Chicago Fast-Track Immunization Clinics](#)<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.chicagoflushots.org).

## Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued [influenza testing and reporting guidelines](#)<sup>2</sup>. Suspected novel and variant influenza, pediatric influenza-associated deaths, influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations and outbreaks of influenza-like illness in a congregate setting should all be reported to CDPH via [INEDSS](#)<sup>3</sup>.

For the week of March 1-7, 2015, five influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations were reported; one was positive for influenza A (not subtyped) and four were positive for influenza B.

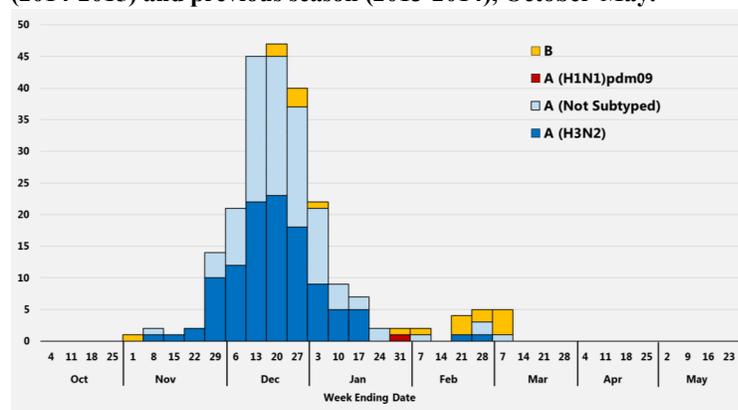
Since September 28, 2014, 231 influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported (**Figure 1**). Among the total ICU hospitalizations reported, 213 were positive for influenza A (110 H3N2, 1 H1N1, and 102 unknown subtype [subtyping not attempted or not all subtypes tested]) and 18 were positive for influenza B. One hundred six (46%) were non-Hispanic Black, 118 (51%) were female, and 145 (63%) were 50 years of age or older (median age of 62 years with a range of 1 month -101 years). Seventy-three (32%) had reported lung disease (including asthma) and 51 (22%) required ventilator support. Nineteen deaths among ICU hospitalizations have been reported.

## How much influenza-like illness is occurring?

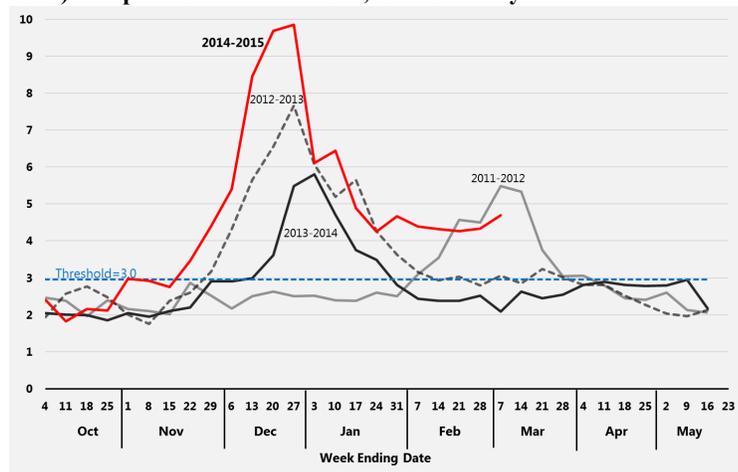
CDPH receives data from over 60 surveillance sites across Chicago, which report the total number of patient visits seen weekly, and of those visits, the number with influenza-like illness (ILI) (i.e., fever of 100° F or greater, with cough or sore throat). All hospitals in Chicago that provide emergent care are required to report on a weekly basis the total number of emergency department visits, and of those visits, the number with ILI. For the week of March 1-7, 2015 (week 9), with 12 hospitals reporting, 4.7 % of emergency department visits were due to ILI (**Figure 2**).

**ESSENCE** is an electronic syndromic surveillance system that utilizes emergency department chief complaint data submitted daily by participating Chicago hospitals. ILI activity is determined solely based on the patient's chief complaint and does not take into account the entire medical record, as the ILI activity reported in Figure 2

**Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated intensive care unit hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for current season (2014-2015) and previous season (2013-2014), October-May.**



**Figure 2. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness based on manual reporting as determined by individual hospitals, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2014-2015) and previous three seasons, October-May.**



does. Currently, 10 Chicago hospitals submit data to ESSENCE. For the week of March 1-7, 2015, 2.1% of emergency department visits were due to ILI (Figure 3).

Several outpatient clinics and two large outpatient clinic networks located in Chicago participate in CDC's Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) by reporting on the number of patients with ILI seen weekly. From March 1-7, 2015 with 37 facilities reporting, 4.1% of visits were due to influenza-like illness (Figure 4).

### Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza subtyping. For the week of March 1-7, 2015, with 6 laboratories reporting, 54 of the 514 (10.5%) specimens tested for influenza were positive. Among this week's positive specimens, 4 were typed as influenza A (H3N2) and 50 were typed as influenza B (Figure 4).

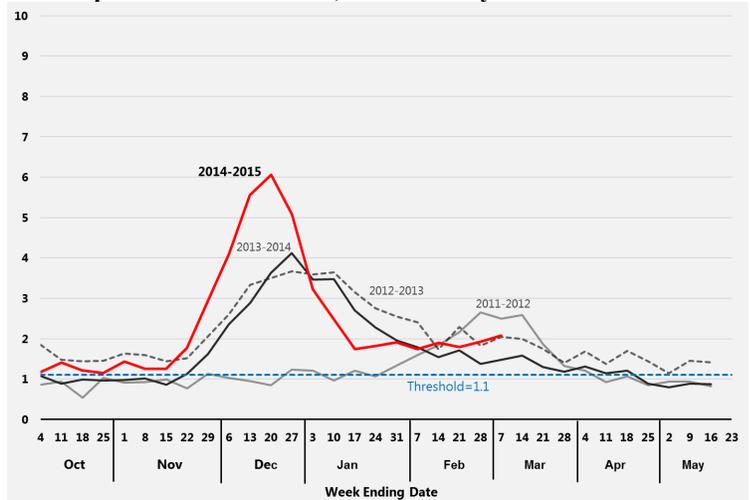
Since September 28, 2014, 2,002 of 13,328 (15%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 1,802 typed as influenza A (5 H1N1, 1,481 H3N2 and 316 unknown subtype) and 200 were typed as influenza B.

### Where can I get more information?

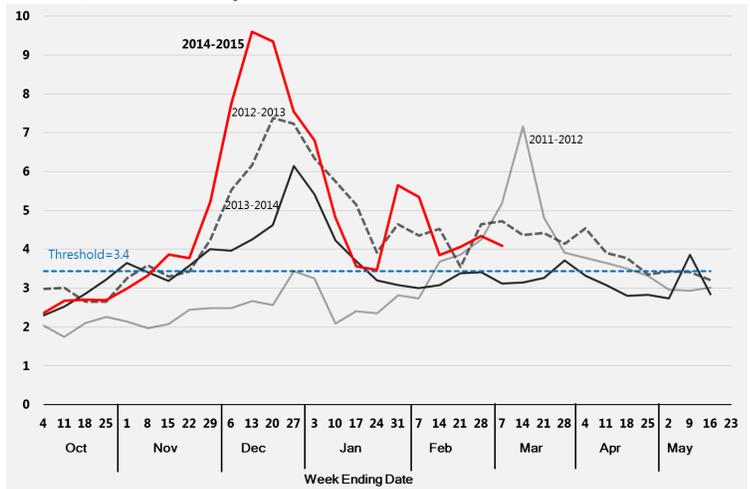
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [FluView](#)<sup>4</sup> report provides national updates and trends related to the intensity of influenza activity across the United States, as well as detailed information on antiviral resistance, severity of illness, and other topics. Updates specific to [Illinois](#)<sup>5</sup> and [Suburban Cook County](#)<sup>6</sup> 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](#)<sup>7</sup>. In 2013, the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC) and CDPH released "[Stop the Spread: A Health Care Guide to Influenza Preparedness](#)"<sup>8</sup>. This report provides an overview of influenza, its impact on public health and how hospitals can prepare for, mitigate the impact of and respond to influenza infections and outbreaks.

The 20th Annual Chicago  
Infection Control Conference  
June 8th, 2015  
The Chicago Cultural Center  
78 E. Washington St, Chicago, IL. 60602  
Registration and Agenda Coming Soon!

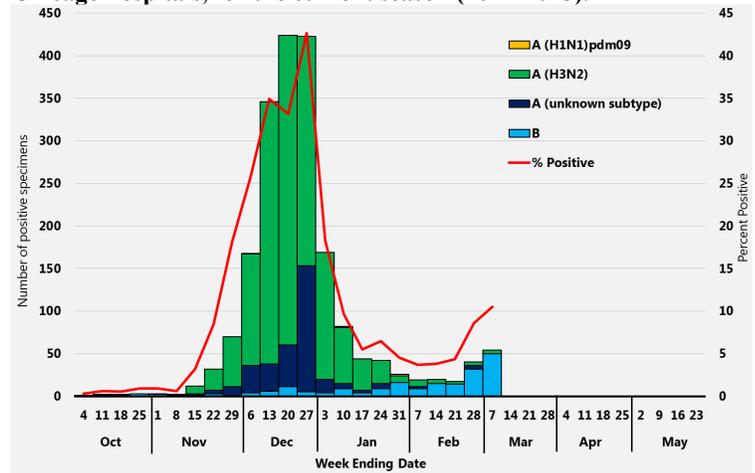
**Figure 3. Percent of emergency department visits attributed to influenza-like illness based on chief complaint data submitted to ESSENCE, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2014-2015) and the previous three seasons, October-May.**



**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 (2014-2015) and the previous three seasons, October-May.**



**Figure 5. Percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza by subtype as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2014-2015).**



<sup>4</sup><http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>; <sup>5</sup><http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/surveillance.htm>; <sup>6</sup><http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports#Influenza>; <sup>7</sup>[http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/supp\\_info/influenza/current\\_flu\\_situationinchicago2011.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdp/supp_info/influenza/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html); <sup>8</sup>[https://www.mchc.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MCHC\\_Influenza\\_2013.pdf](https://www.mchc.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MCHC_Influenza_2013.pdf)