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[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.

No Activity	Sporadic	Local	Regional	Widespread

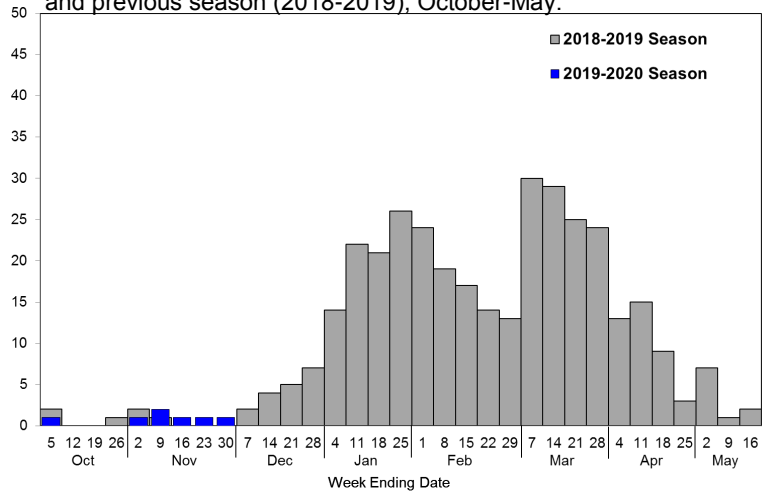Illinois Influenza Geographic Spread

What is the risk?

Currently, the risk of influenza infection has increased.

Are severe cases of influenza occurring?

For the week of November 24-30, 2019, one influenza-associated ICU hospitalization was reported.

Since September 29, 2019, seven influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations have been reported; all were positive for influenza A (2 H3N2, 3 H1N1pdm09, 2 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) (**Figure 1**).

Which influenza strains are circulating?

Data on influenza virus test results are reported by Chicago laboratories performing influenza RT-PCR. For the week of November 24-30, 2019, 39 of the 988 (4.0%) specimens tested for influenza were positive; 21 typed as influenza A (7 H3N2, 2 H1N1pdm09, and 12 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 18 typed as influenza B (**Figure 2**).

Since September 29, 2019, 86 of 7,382 (1.2%) specimens tested for influenza have been positive; 45 typed as influenza A (16 H3N2, 6 H1N1pdm09, and 23 unknown subtype [subtyping not performed or not all subtypes tested]) and 41 typed as influenza B. The cumulative percent of specimens testing positive for influenza is higher than last season during the same time period (**Figure 3**)
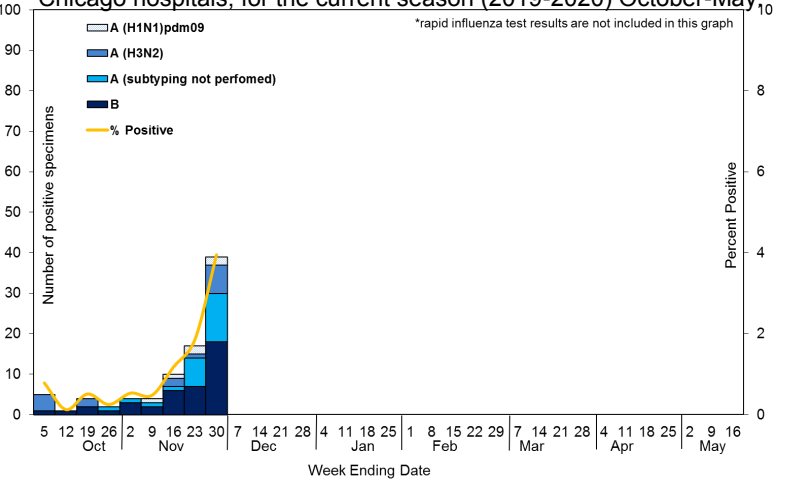

Figure 1. Number of influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations reported for Chicago residents, for the current season (2019-2020) and previous season (2018-2019), October-May.

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 (2019-2020) October-May

*rapid influenza test results are not included in this graph

Figure 3. Cumulative percent of specimens testing positive (by RT-PCR) for influenza as reported by local laboratories serving Chicago hospitals, for the current season (2019-2020), and previous two seasons, October-May.
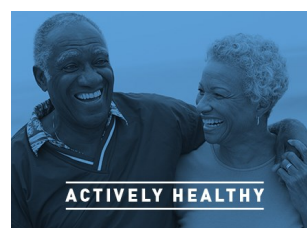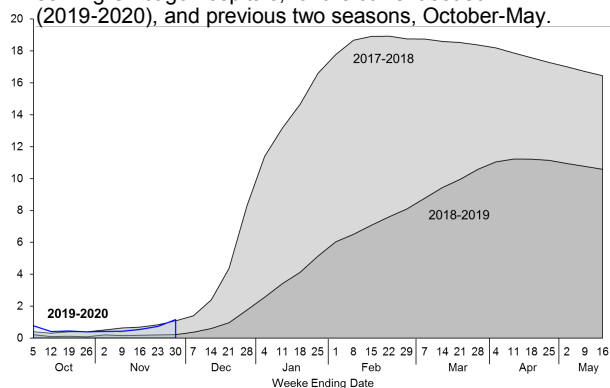
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WWW.CHICAGO.GOV/FLU

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

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 November 24-30, 2019, 91 of the 4,034 (2.3%) reported outpatient clinic visits were due to influenza-like illness, which is slightly lower than Illinois at 2.6% (**Figure 4**).

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 November 24-30, 2019, 549 of the 22,250 (2.5%) total emergency department visits were due to influenza-like illness (**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 November 24-30, 2019, 24 of 59 (41%) zip codes had moderate to high ILI activity levels; this is higher than last season where 32% of zip codes were at moderate to high levels for the same time period.

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FluView[2] 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[3] and Suburban Cook County[4] 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[5].

Reporting Information

Illinois Department of Public Health recently issued Influenza Testing and Reporting Guidance[6]. The Chicago Department of Public Health has previously issued guidance on reporting influenza-associated ICU hospitalizations[7]. Healthcare facilities can report cases to the Chicago Department of Public Health via the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (INEDSS)[8]. For more information contact: SyndromicSurveillance@cityofchicago.org

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

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 (2019-2020) and previous season, October-May.
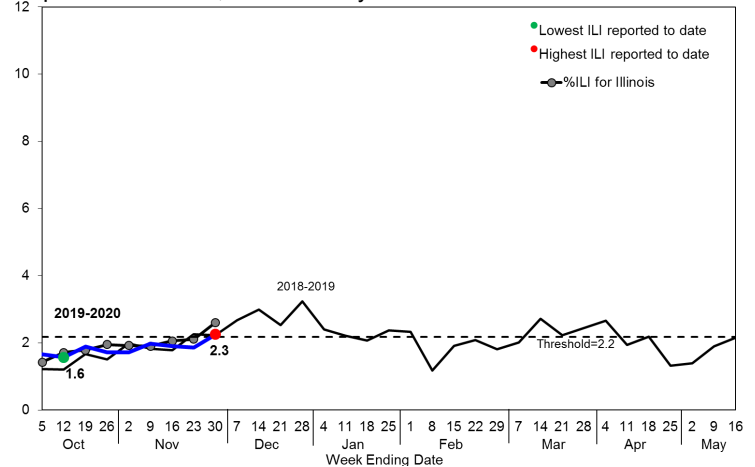

Figure 5. Percent of **emergency department** visits attributed to influenza-like illness for Chicago zip codes based on chief complaint data submitted to **ESSENCE**, Chicago, by week, for the current season (2019-2020) and previous two seasons, October-May.
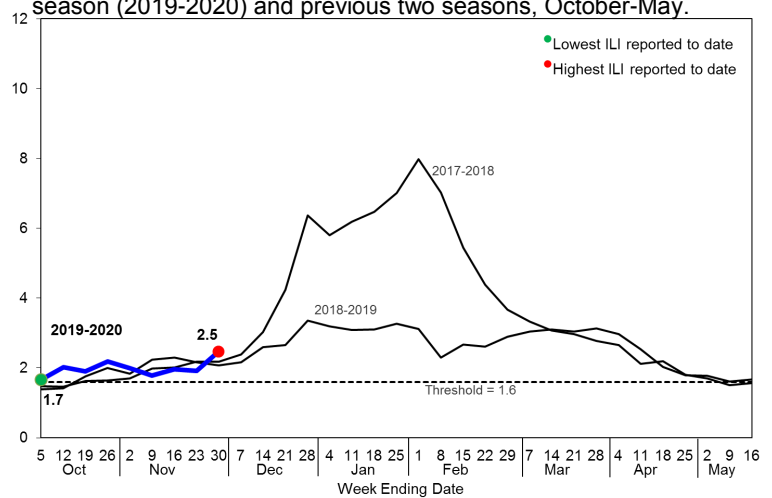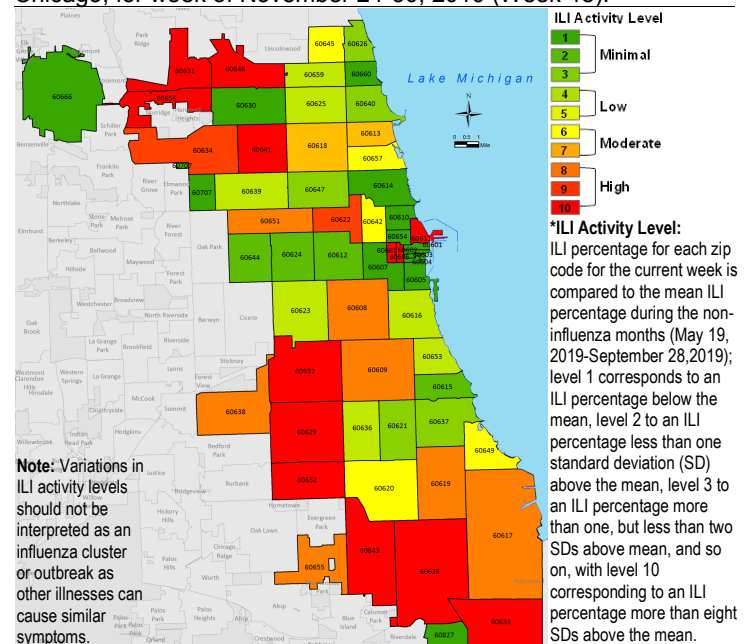

Figure 6. Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity level by patient zip code determined by chief complaint data submitted to **ESSENCE**, Chicago, for week of November 24-30, 2019 (Week 48).

ILI Activity Level

1, 2, 3	Minimal
4, 5	Low
6, 7	Moderate
8, 9, 10	High

*ILI Activity Level: ILI percentage for each zip code for the current week is compared to the mean ILI percentage during the non-influenza months (May 19, 2019-September 28,2019); level 1 corresponds to an ILI percentage below the mean, level 2 to an ILI percentage less than one standard deviation (SD) above the mean, level 3 to an ILI percentage more than one, but less than two SDs above mean, and so on, with level 10 corresponding to an ILI percentage more than eight SDs above the mean.

Note: Variations in ILI activity levels should not be interpreted as an influenza cluster or outbreak as other illnesses can cause similar symptoms.

[2] http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm; [3] http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/influenza-surveillance; [4] https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/influenza/;
[5] https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/health-protection/current_flu_situationinchicago2011.html;
[6] www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/20190916idphohp-annual-flu-testing.pdf ;
[7] https://www.chicagohan.org/documents/14171/39923/Reporting+Influenza-Associated+ICU+Hospitalizations/bc2f49b2-cf74-487c-9441-0b0a930e4b41; [8] httpsdph.partner.illinois.gov/