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What is Influenza?

Influenza is a virus which primarily causes a respiratory illness (flu), which can then be spread to others by tiny air droplets when people talk, cough, or sneeze. Symptoms include cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, headaches, and body aches. Older people, young children, and people with certain chronic conditions or weakened immune systems, are at high risk for severe flu complications that may lead to hospitalization, or even death. **The best way to prevent the flu or lessen its symptoms is to get the flu vaccine. All individuals 6 months and older should be vaccinated annually.** Covid mitigation efforts such as wearing masks, social distancing, etc., greatly reduced cases of Influenza and those with influenza-like-illness during the previous (2020–2021) flu season.

This report summarizes the weekly flu activity in Lake County, Illinois. The typical Influenza “flu” season runs from early October through the end of March but may run longer. Please note all data are preliminary and are subject to change.

Weekly Summary

The following data was obtained from the Illinois National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (I-NEDSS), and from the Illinois Dept of Public Health website.

| Geographic Area | Influenza-related intensive care unit admissions | | Influenza-related pediatric deaths (0–18 years) | | Influenza/Influenza-like illness ^a cluster or outbreaks in Congregate settings ^b | |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|---|--------------|--|--------------|
| | Week – No. of Cases | Season Total | Week – No. of Cases | Season Total | Week – No. of Cases | Season Total |
| Lake County | Wk 14 – 1 | 5 | Wk 14 – 0 | 0 | Wk 14 – 0 | 0 |
| Illinois ^c | Wk 13 – 6 | 92 | Wk 13 – 0 | 0 | Wk 13 – 1 | 16 |

^a Influenza-like illness (ILI) is defined as fever (temperature $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ [37.8°C]) and cough and/or sore throat without a known cause other than influenza.

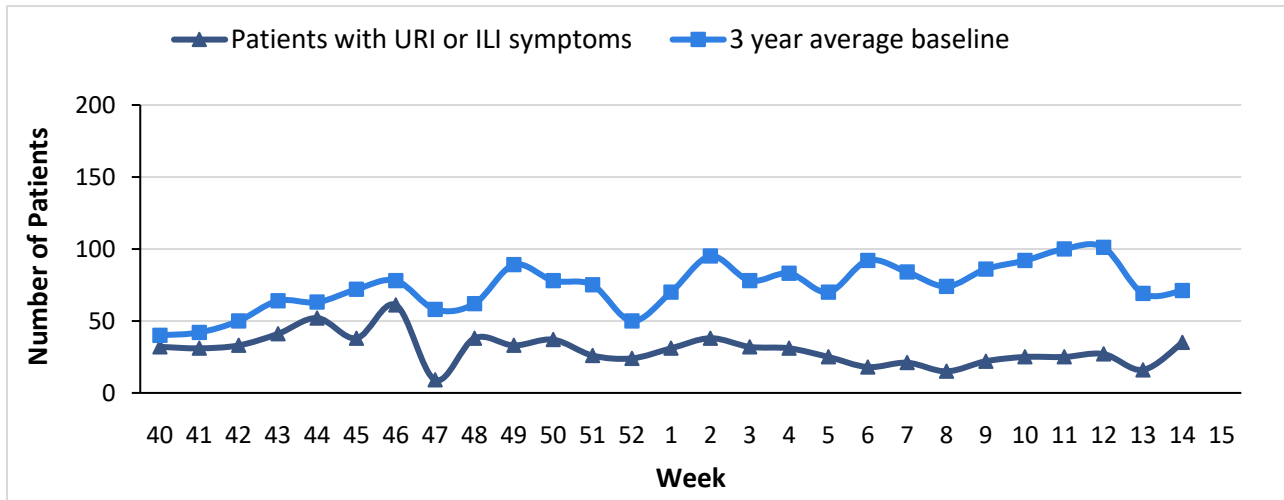
^b Congregate settings are defined as long term care facilities, group homes, hospitals, and correctional facilities.

^c Illinois Department of Public Health reporting weeks may be delayed.

Lake County Health Department Virologic Surveillance

Lake County Health Department, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) include 8 outpatient clinics. In 2020, the FQHCs had 76,044 healthcare provider visits. The total number of patients with upper respiratory tract infections (URI) or ILI was obtained from electronic health record for these sites.

Figure 1. The number of patients diagnosed with upper respiratory tract infections (URI) or ILI, as reported by Lake County Health Department, Federally Qualified Health Centers, by week for the influenza season 2021–2022



The 3-year average baseline is defined as the average number of patients with URI or ILI symptoms for weeks 40–52 for 2018, 2019 & 2020. **Starting week 1 onward, the 3-year average will be for 2019, 2020 and 2021.**

Influenza-Associated Intensive Care Unit Hospitalizations in Lake County

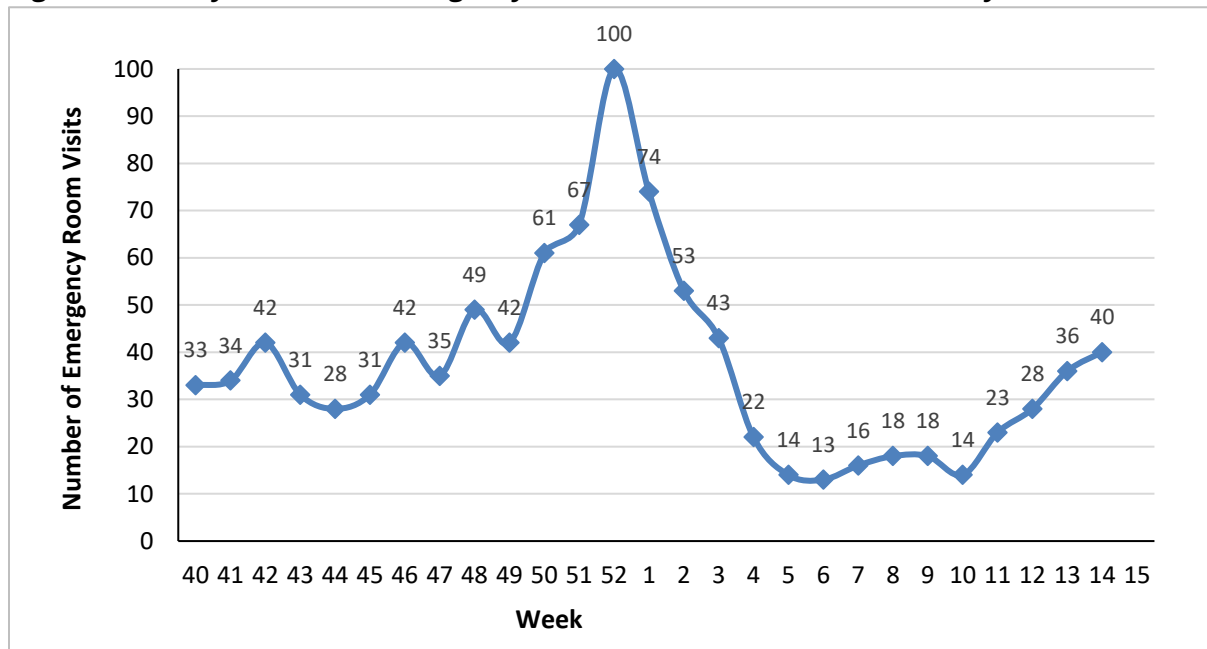
There was 1 influenza-associated intensive care unit admission reported to LCHD/CHC during **week 14**. A total of 0 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported for the 2021–2022 flu season.

Absenteeism due to Influenza-like Illness in Lake County Schools

Due to the prevention efforts of COVID-19 in Lake County Schools, the Lake County Health Department is not actively collecting surveillance data for the 2021–2022 school year.

Emergency Room visits in Lake County due to Influenza-like Illness

The Illinois Department of Public Health collects emergency department visits from all acute care hospitals in Illinois for syndromic surveillance (ESSENCE surveillance system). In this report, the visits are classified as ILI based on the chief complaints that include terms “influenza” or “fever and cough or sore throat” similar to the CDC ILINET definition while excluding terms unrelated to ILI. In **week 14**, we saw **40** emergency room visits for ILI in the seven Lake County Hospitals.

Figure 4. Weekly number of Emergency Room visits due to ILI, Lake County, IL, 2021-2022

For questions regarding influenza and reportable diseases, please contact Communicable Disease (CD program) at (847) 377-8130.