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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.**

Wearing masks, Washing hands, Watching your distance (3W's), and staying home when sick, greatly reduced cases of influenza and those with influenza-like illness during the previous (2021–2022) flu season. **This fall season we are seeing a large increase in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in children 0-5 years old and anticipate increases in COVID-19 and flu.** Please practice the 3W's and stay home when sick.

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 45 – 4	4	Wk 45 – 0	0	Wk 45 – 0	0
Illinois ^c	Wk 44 – 5	46	Wk 44 – 0	0	Wk 44 – 1	2

^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.

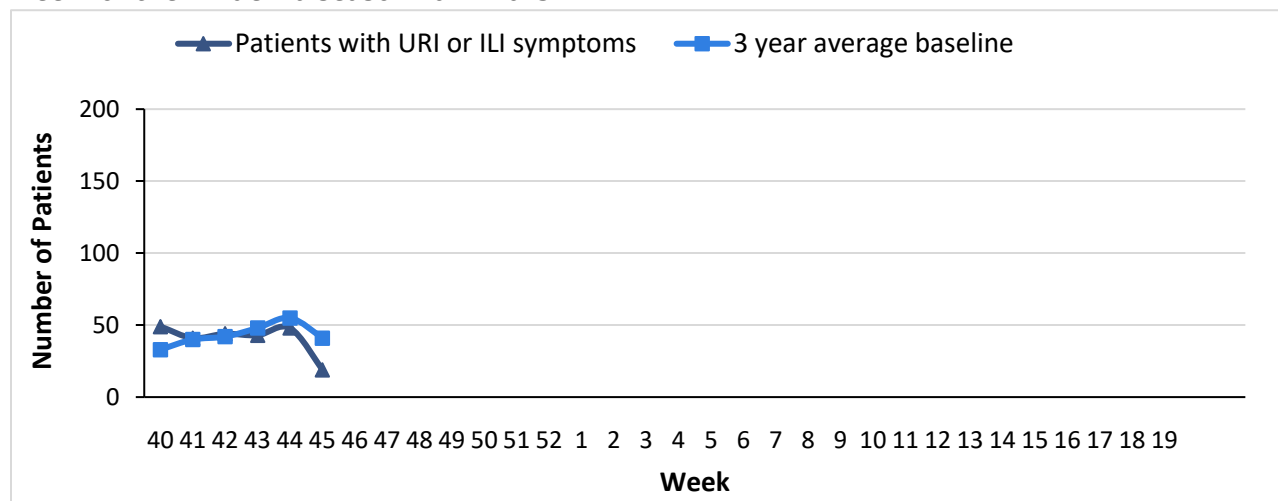
^c Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) reporting weeks may be delayed.

Per the CDC: During **week 44**, there were **3** pediatric deaths reported due to influenza across the United States. A total of **5** flu deaths has been reported for the 2022-2023 flu season.

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 records 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 2022–2023



The 3-year average baseline is defined as the average number of patients with URI or ILI symptoms for weeks 40–52 for years 2019, 2020 & 2021. **Starting week 01 of 2023 and onward, the 3-year average will be for 2020, 2021, and 2022.**

Influenza-Associated Intensive Care Unit Hospitalizations in Lake County

There were **4** influenza-associated intensive care unit admissions reported to LCHD/CHC during **week 45**. A total of **0** influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported for the 2022–2023 flu season.

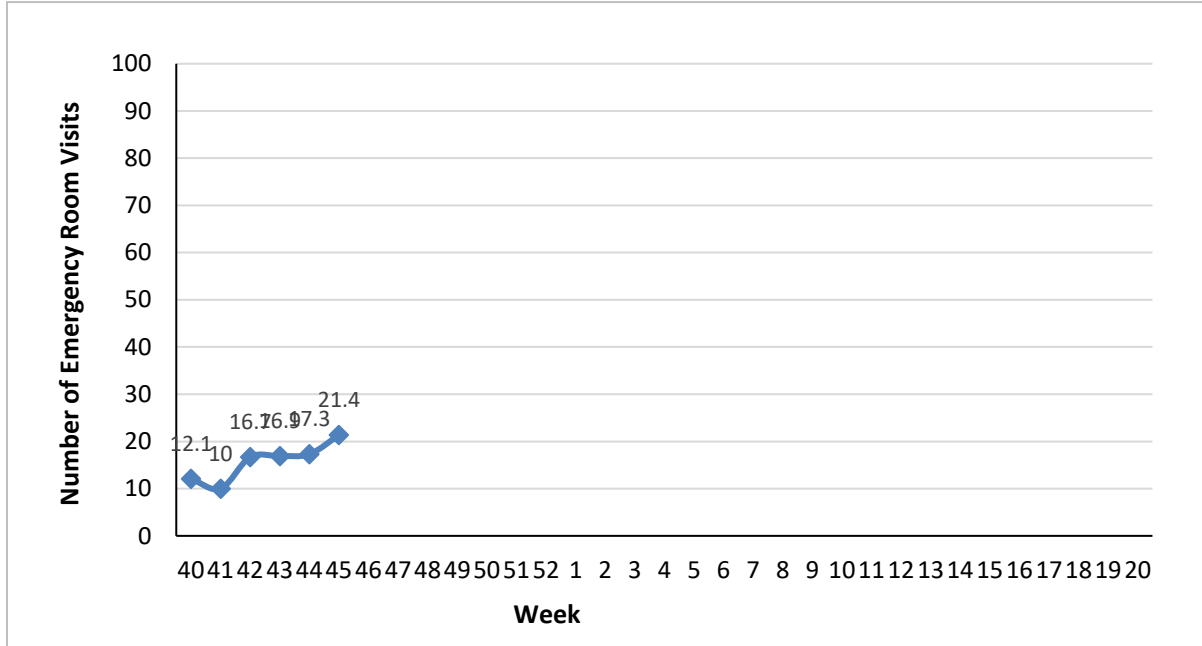
Absenteeism due to Influenza-like Illness in Lake County Schools

The Lake County Health Department have reached out to schools, previously interested, to collect ILI surveillance data for the 2022–2023 school year and hope to report this data in the future.

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 45**, we saw **21.4** 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, 2022–2023



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