



This monthly report shares the latest trends and news in communicable disease for Oak Park, Illinois and our surrounding community. Check out www.oak-park.us/nursing for past reports.

If you have any questions about communicable or emerging diseases, please reach out to the Public Health Department at health@oak-park.us or 708-358-5480.

Rabies

Dogs and Warmer Weather

As temperatures rise each spring and summer, so does the number of dog bite incidents in our community. With more residents spending time outdoors, at dog parks, neighborhood gatherings, and social events, the likelihood of human-dog interactions increases significantly. Each year in Oak Park, approximately 50 animal bite incidents are reported to the Oak Park Police Department and/or Oak Park Animal Control. Warmer weather can heighten agitation in dogs, making them more prone to reactive behavior. Additionally, with children out of school and parks and recreational areas seeing heavier foot traffic, the risk of unplanned or unsupervised dog encounters rises.

To reduce your risk of a dog bite, keep these tips in mind:

- Always ask the owner's permission before petting an unfamiliar dog
- Be aware of your surroundings and approach dogs with caution
- Avoid disturbing or provoking dogs
- Supervise children closely around dogs, even familiar ones

Bats

If you discover a bat inside your home or any enclosed space, particularly if the bat may have been present while you were sleeping, do not attempt to handle or release it. Contact Cook County Animal and Rabies Control at 708-974-6140 and a representative will respond to safely collect the animal.

In the meantime:

- Confine the bat to a single room by closing doors and windows
- Keep all pets and children away from the area
- Do not release the bat – it needs to be tested for rabies
- Await assistance from Cook County Animal and Rabies Control

Rabies Exposure

Rabies is almost universally fatal once symptoms appear, but it is completely preventable with prompt treatment. If you have been bitten by a dog or had a potential exposure to a bat, contact the **Oak Park Public Health Department at 708-358-5480 during business hours or West Suburban Consolidated Dispatch after hours at 708-771-9110** or speak with your healthcare provider as soon as possible, ideally within 24–48 hours of the potential exposure. They can help determine whether you need rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), a series of shots that is highly effective at preventing rabies when started quickly. **Do not wait to seek guidance.**

Respiratory Virus Season Update

Oak Park's wastewater flows to the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant (SWRP), the largest wastewater treatment facility in the world, serving 2.2 million people across Chicago and its suburbs (see Figure 1). When individuals are infected with certain viruses and bacteria, they shed them into the wastewater system. In Stickney, wastewater samples are collected one to two times per week and analyzed by the University of Illinois Chicago for viral remnants in the water.



Figure 1. Geographic Area served by SWRP

The University of Illinois reports the levels of COVID, RSV, Influenza A, and Influenza B detected in wastewater across the state on the Illinois Wastewater Surveillance System [website](#). The CDC's [Wastewater Monitoring Program](#) gathers data on these illnesses, plus mpox, avian flu, and measles.

COVID-19 Wastewater Levels in Illinois

COVID-19 levels in wastewater followed a similar pattern to influenza this season, building steadily through December and hitting its highest level in early January with a wastewater viral activity level that would be considered "very high." This peak was nearly identical to levels detected in July and August of 2024, meaning COVID hit about the same intensity. Figure 2, below, illustrates the levels of COVID-19 in Illinois wastewater as they fluctuate over time.

The variant behind much of this activity was XFG, or "Stratus," an Omicron subvariant that has been present in the area since August 2025. The encouraging news is that COVID has since retreated dramatically, now at "very low" levels and roughly 15 times below the January peak.

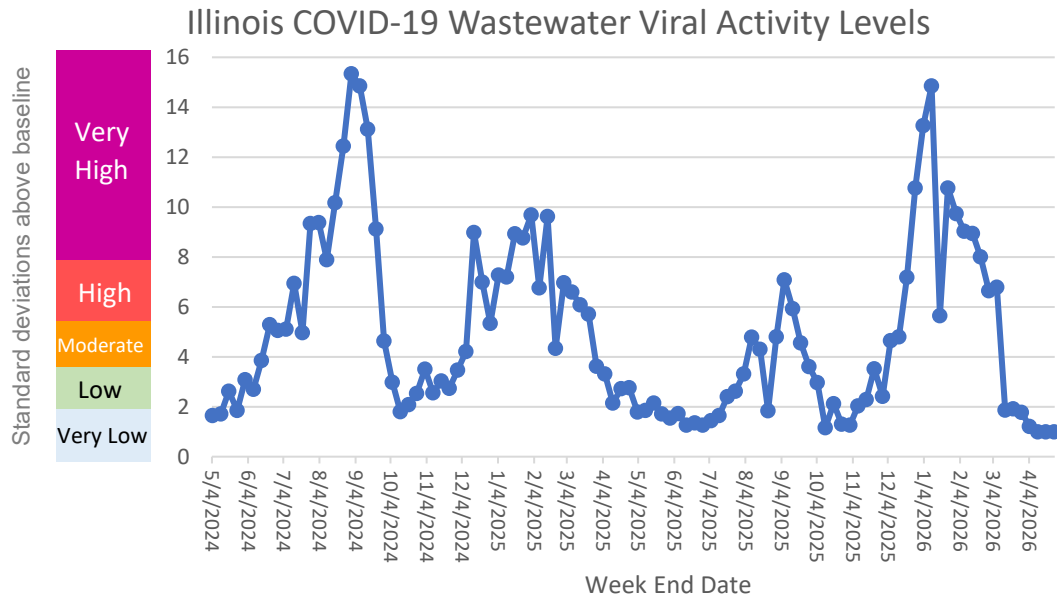


Figure 2. COVID-19 levels in Illinois wastewater, May 2024 – April 2026

Influenza-A Wastewater Levels in Illinois

Wastewater surveillance showed that influenza has declined sharply after a milder season than last year. Influenza began rising in late December and peaked in early January. While both seasons saw significant flu activity, reaching levels considered “very high,” this year's peak was about 42% lower than last year's. Flu levels have since dropped back down to baseline as of April, meaning community spread is now considered “very low.” Figure 3, below, illustrates the levels of influenza in Illinois wastewater as they fluctuate over time.

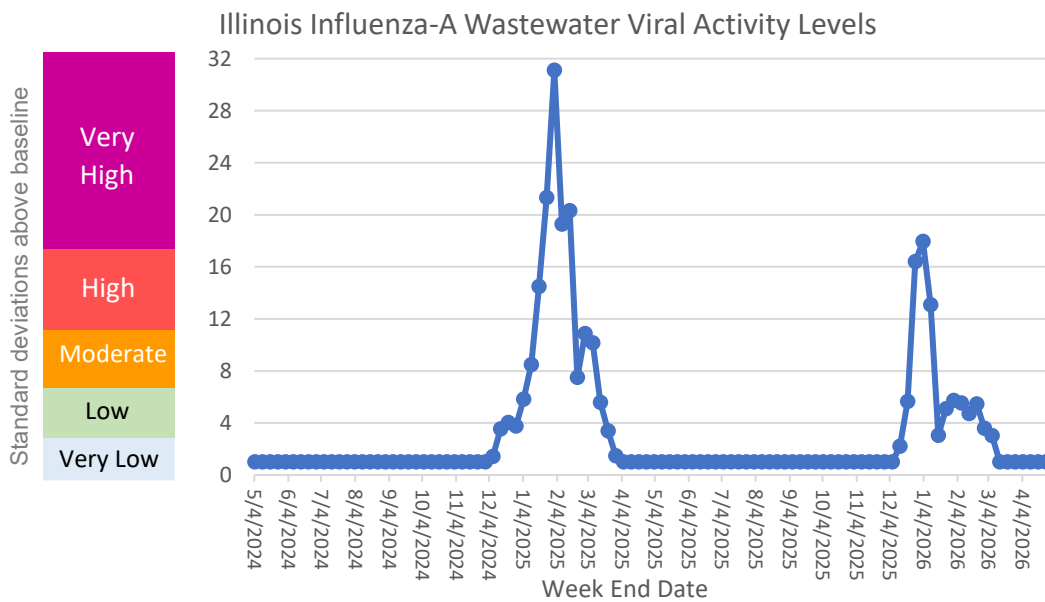


Figure 3. Influenza-A levels in Illinois wastewater, May 2024 – April 2026

RSV Wastewater Levels in Illinois

RSV levels in wastewater followed the same seasonal pattern as COVID-19 and influenza this year, remaining at “very low” levels through the fall before rising in late February and peaking in early March at levels classified as “high.” Since March, levels have dropped back down and are now considered “very low.” Figure 4, below, illustrates the levels of RSV in Illinois wastewater as they fluctuate over time.

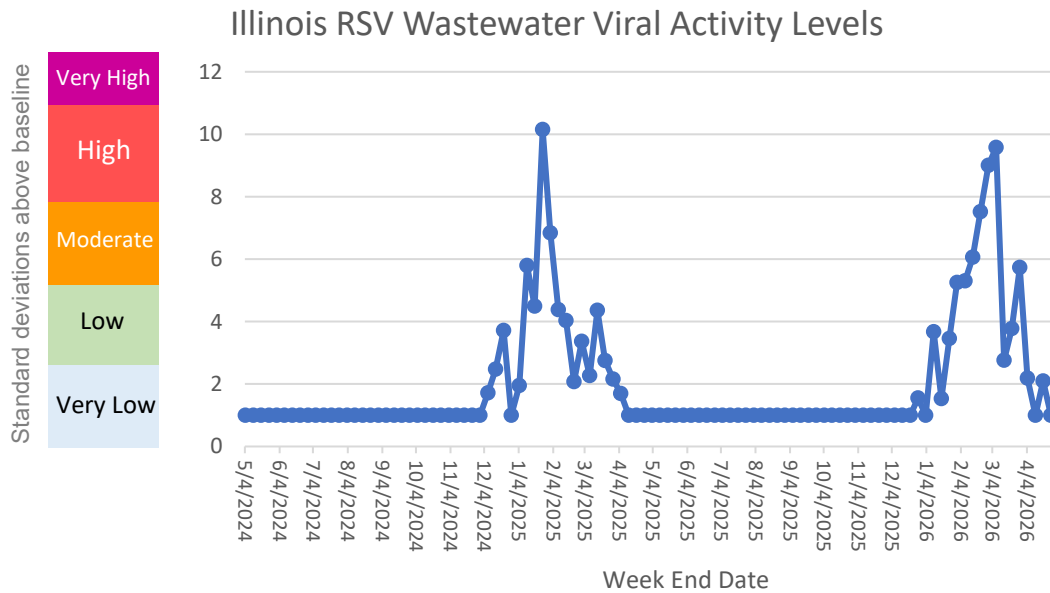


Figure 4. RSV levels in Illinois wastewater, May 2024 – April 2026

Source: [National Wastewater Surveillance System](#)