
2019-2020 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

Update of Current Status

March 11th, 2020

Overall Assessment

When compared to earlier in the season, current influenza activity in the Middlesex-London region appears to be decreasing. However, the Health Unit continues to receive reports of both influenza A and B cases from across the City of London and Middlesex County.

Analysis and Action

The influenza season continues in Ontario, with flu activity being reported across the province. If they haven't already done so, local residents are still encouraged to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible, since it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide protection.

Regardless of the level of local influenza activity, there are some easy-to-follow steps that residents can take to avoid becoming sick throughout the year. While washing your hands with soap and warm water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, remain effective ways to prevent many illnesses, including influenza, residents should also cover their coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently, and stay home when they feel sick and/or have a fever.

Details of Current Local Activity

Between March 1st and March 7th, there were 10 influenza B and 5 influenza A cases reported to the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Among these cases, seven people were hospitalized, and one death was reported. No influenza outbreaks were declared in local facilities during the most recent week of surveillance.

Appendix A provides more detail about laboratory-based influenza activity indicators for the most recent reporting week, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness. A graph showing all 322 laboratory-confirmed cases by week of illness onset is provided at the end of this report in Appendix B.

Provincial and National Comparison

In the most recent *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin* (covering February 23rd to 29th), Public Health Ontario states that influenza levels are lower when compared to previous weeks; activity is low for both influenza A and influenza B.

In the most recent *FluWatch* (covering February 23rd to 29th), the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that while both influenza A and B continue to be detected, influenza B circulation appears to have decreased in recent weeks. So far this season, 58% of cases identified have been influenza A, with 65% of subtyped specimens being the A(H1N1) strain. The greatest percentage of influenza A(H3N2) cases (47%) have been among those aged 65 and over, while influenza A(H1N1) cases have been distributed among adults 20 to 64 years old (51%) as well as seniors 65 year of age and older (30%). Influenza B has been identified in 42% of cases this season; 87% of these have been among people under the age of 45.

- The latest *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, issued by Public Health Ontario (PHO), is available at <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/commonly-used-products/respiratory-pathogens-weekly>
- The latest *FluWatch* report, issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), is available at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/>

Appendix A

Summary of Community Influenza Surveillance Indicators for Middlesex-London March 1st to March 7th, 2020

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2019-2020 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Number Reported: <i>Year to Date (from September 1, 2019)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases^{1,4}	Mar. 1-7 (week 10) ²	Influenza A – 5 cases Influenza B – 10 cases	Influenza A – 213 cases Influenza B – 109 cases	Influenza A: Lower than 10 cases reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29). Influenza B: Lower than 14 cases reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29).
Influenza sub-types¹	Mar. 1-7	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 2 cases Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 3 cases Influenza B not yet subtyped – 10 cases	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 48 cases Influenza A (H3) – 6 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 159 cases Influenza B not yet subtyped – 109 cases	
Hospitalizations^{1,5}	Mar. 1-7	7	155	Lower than 11 hospitalizations reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29).
Deaths^{1,5}	Mar. 1-7	1	10	Lower than three deaths reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29).
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Mar. 1-7	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks Influenza A & B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 6 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks Influenza A & B – 1 outbreak	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Feb. 23-29) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Feb. 23-29) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza A & B Same as the previous week (Feb. 23-29) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario)³	Feb. 23-29 (week 9) ²	Influenza A – 8.3% positivity Influenza B – 5.6% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Lower than 9.8% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 16-22). Influenza B: Lower than 8.3% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 16-22).

Notes:

1 Numbers are subject to change week by week due to the retrospective nature of reporting.

2 Weekly influenza monitoring often uses numbered weeks from 1 to 52 weeks per year. A reference week calendar can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance/fluwatch-weeks-calendar.html>

3 Public Health Ontario, Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin 2019-2020

4 The week cases are reported to the Health Unit may not be the same as week of illness onset.

5 The week hospitalizations and deaths are reported to the Health Unit may not be the same as the week in which they occurred, or the same as the week of illness onset.

Table 2: Summary of community-based respiratory illness indicators, Middlesex-London, 2019-2020 influenza surveillance season

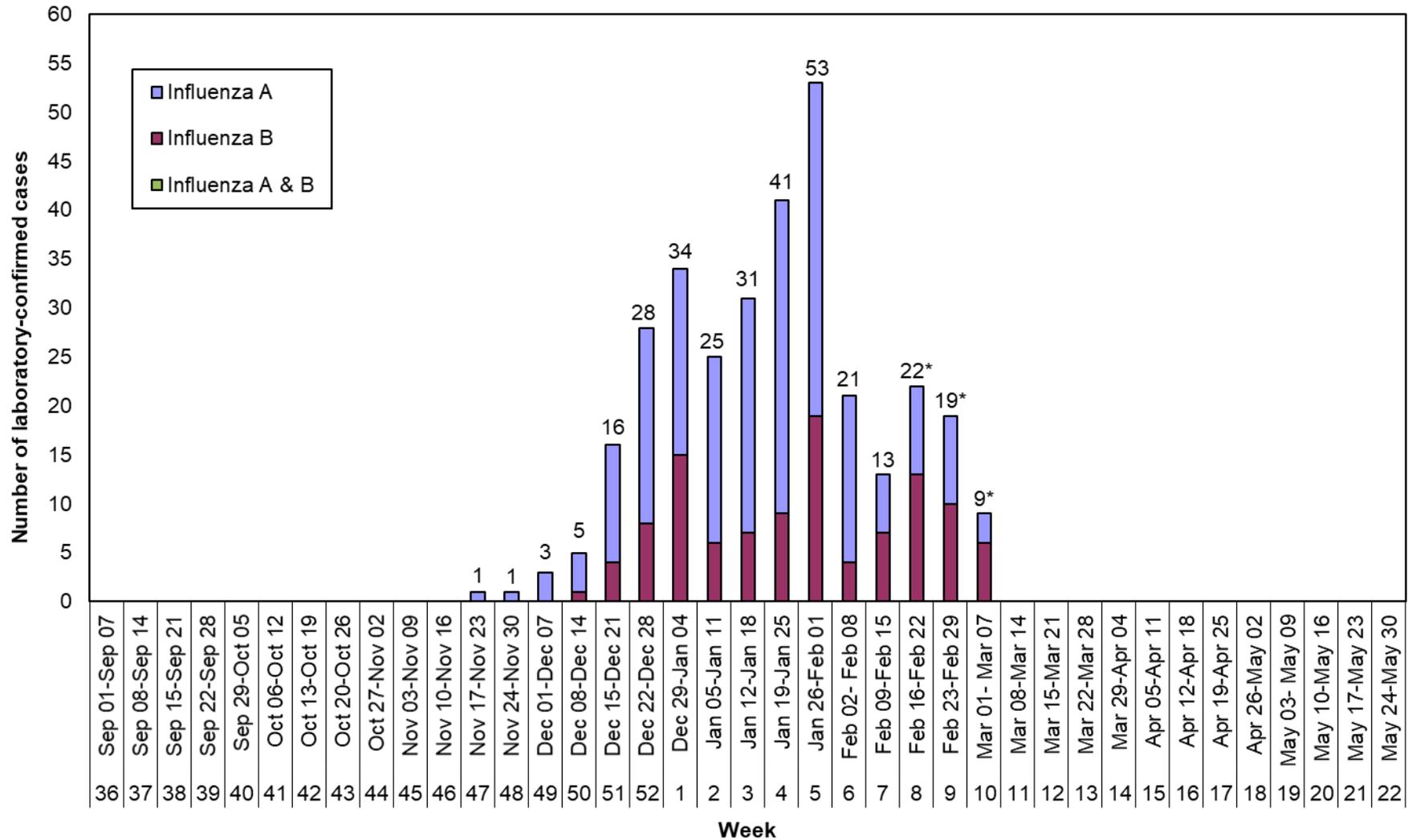
Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness	Mar. 1-7	<p>An average of 9.4% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms.</p> <p>The proportion was highest at the paediatric emergency department, where 25.7% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms.</p>	<p>Same as 9.4% reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29).</p> <p>Similar to 25.3% reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29).</p>
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Mar. 2-6	Thirty-four elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	Higher than the previous week (Feb. 24-28) when 29 elementary schools reported increased absenteeism.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following community partners who provide data for this report:

- London Health Sciences Centre
- St. Joseph's Health Care London
- Thames Valley District School Board

Appendix B

Laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, by influenza date† Middlesex-London 2019-2020 influenza season (N=322)



Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit internal influenza tracking database, extracted March 10, 2020.

† 'Influenza date' is the earliest of: symptom onset date, specimen collection date, specimen result date, and reported date. As such, the weekly counts shown in this section differ from those provided in other sections of this report.

* Counts may be incomplete and are subject to change due to the retrospective nature of reporting.