
2018-2019 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status December 19th, 2018

Final report of 2018

This is the final *Community Influenza Surveillance Report* of 2018. Reporting will resume on January 9, 2019.

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in the Middlesex-London region is increasing, with sporadic activity reported in the community.

Analysis and Action

Ontario's influenza season is under way. The Health Unit encourages local residents who have not yet received their seasonal influenza vaccine to do so as soon as possible. It is important to get the flu shot before the arrival of peak influenza activity, as it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide optimal protection against the flu.

Regardless of the level of local influenza activity, residents can take a number of steps 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 of preventing many illnesses, including influenza, local residents should also cover their coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently, and stay home when they feel sick.

Details of Current Local Activity

Between December 9th and 15th there were six laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A reported to the Health Unit, two of whom were hospitalized.

Appendix A provides more detail about laboratory-based influenza activity indicators for the current reporting week, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness.

Provincial and National Comparison

According to Public Health Ontario in this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, influenza A and influenza B activity across the province remain low, however, when compared to previous weeks, the level of activity continues to increase. Both influenza A and influenza B have been detected in Ontario, although the majority of positive specimens have been influenza A. Among the influenza A specimens that have been subtyped this season, 67.6% have been the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's *FluWatch* reports that influenza activity continues to increase across Canada. The most common influenza virus identified is influenza A, with the majority of subtyped specimens being the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain. To date this season, 69.9% of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 cases have been among those under the age of 45 years, while 67.9% of all influenza A(H3N2) cases have been among those 65 years of age and over.

- The latest *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, issued by Public Health Ontario (PHO), is available at <http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/SurveillanceServices/Pages/Ontario-Respiratory-Virus-Bulletin.aspx>
- 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
December 9th to December 15th, 2018

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2018-2019 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Number Reported: <i>Year to Date (from September 1, 2018)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases^{1, 4}	Dec. 9-15 (week 50) ²	Influenza A – 6 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 10 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: Higher than the previous week (Dec. 2-8) when four cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Dec. 2-8) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types¹	Dec. 9-15	Influenza A (H3) – 1 case Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 1 case Influenza A not yet subtyped – 4 cases	Influenza A (H3) – 2 cases Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 3 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 5 cases	
Hospitalizations^{1, 5}	Dec. 9-15	2	5	Lower than the previous week (Dec. 2-8) when three hospitalizations were reported.
Deaths^{1, 5}	Dec. 9-15	0	0	Same as the previous week (Dec. 2-8) when no deaths were reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Dec. 9-15	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Dec. 2-8) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Dec. 2-8) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario)³	Dec. 2-8 (week 49) ²	Influenza A – 6.2% positivity Influenza B – 0.1% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Higher than 4.9% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 25-Dec. 1). Influenza B: Same as 0.1% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 25-Dec. 1).

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 2018-2019

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, 2018-2019 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	Dec. 9-15	An average of 9.9% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 30.7% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms.	Higher than 8.0% reported the previous week (Dec. 2-8). Higher than 24.0% reported the previous week (Dec. 2-8).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Dec. 10-14	Twenty-six elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	Lower than the previous week (Dec. 3-7) when 27 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

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