
2018-2019 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status November 21st, 2018

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in Middlesex-London remains low. To date, there have been no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases identified in London or Middlesex County, however public health units in other regions of Ontario are reporting sporadic or localized activity.

Analysis and Action

The influenza season in Ontario has begun. If they haven't done so already, the Health Unit is encouraging local residents to receive their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible, well in advance 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 influenza activity in the community, local residents can take a number of steps to avoid becoming sick all through the year. While washing your hands with soap and warm water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, remains an effective way to prevent 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 November 11th and 17th there were no laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported to the Health Unit. There have also been no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases reported to the Health Unit since the beginning of the influenza surveillance season on September 1st.

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

Provincial and National Comparison

According to this week's Public Health Ontario Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin, influenza A and influenza B activity across the province is described as low, however the level of activity is increasing. The Public Health Ontario Laboratory subtypes a portion of positive influenza samples. Among the influenza A specimens that have been tested to date in Ontario, the majority have been A(H3N2), with A(H1N1)pdm09 detected as well.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's FluWatch reports that influenza activity is continuing to increase across Canada. The most common influenza virus identified is influenza A, with the majority being the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain, although A(H3N2) has been detected in some provinces, including Ontario.

- 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 November 11th to November 17th, 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}	Nov. 11-17 (week 46) ²	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Nov. 4-10) when no cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Nov. 4-10) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types ¹	Nov. 11-17	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Hospitalizations ^{1,5}	Nov. 11-17	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Deaths ^{1,5}	Nov. 11-17	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Nov. 11-17	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	No local institutional outbreaks declared to date.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³	Nov. 4-10 (week 45) ²	Influenza A – 1.7% positivity Influenza B – 0.8% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Higher than 1.3% positivity reported the previous week (Oct. 28-Nov. 3). Influenza B: Higher than 0.2% positivity reported the previous week (Oct. 28-Nov. 3).

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	Nov. 11-17	An average of 7.2% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 23.3% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms.	Higher than 6.5% reported the previous week (Nov. 4-10). Higher than 21.6% reported the previous week (Nov. 4-10).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Nov. 12-16	Sixteen elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	Higher than the previous week (Nov. 5-9) when ten 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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