
2018-2019 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

Update of Current Status

January 16th, 2019

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in the Middlesex-London region continues to increase, with cases reported from across Middlesex County and the City of London.

Analysis and Action

The influenza season is well under way in the Middlesex-London region and across Ontario. The Health Unit encourages local residents who have not yet received their seasonal influenza vaccine to do so as soon as possible, 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 January 6th and 12th there were 22 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A reported to the Health Unit. Of these, eight were hospitalized, and one death was reported.

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. A graph showing all 76 laboratory-confirmed cases by week of illness onset is provided at the end of this report in Appendix B.

Provincial and National Comparison

According to Public Health Ontario in this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, influenza activity across the province is increasing. Influenza A activity across Ontario is moderate, while influenza B activity remains low. 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, 80.7% have been the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's *FluWatch* reports that in the first week of 2019, laboratory detections of influenza declined compared to previous weeks. The latest edition of *FluWatch* also suggests that at a national level, influenza activity may have peaked at the end of December 2018. To date this season, the most common influenza virus identified is influenza A, with the majority of subtyped specimens being the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain. Most (67.5%) influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 cases have been among those under the age of 45 years, while 61.3% of all influenza A(H3) 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 January 6th to 12th, 2019

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}	Jan. 6-12 (week 2) ²	Influenza A – 22 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 76 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: Lower than the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5) when 24 cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types¹	Jan. 6-12	Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 2 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 20 cases	Influenza A (H3) – 2 cases Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 11 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 63 cases	
Hospitalizations^{1,5}	Jan. 6-12	8	44	Lower than the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5) when 17 hospitalizations were reported.
Deaths^{1,5}	Jan. 6-12	1	1	Higher than the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5) when no deaths were reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Jan. 6-12	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 1 outbreak Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A: Lower than the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5) when one outbreak was reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario)³	Dec. 30-Jan. 5 (week 1) ²	Influenza A – 17.5% positivity Influenza B – 0.1% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Higher than 16.2% positivity reported the previous week (Dec. 23-29). Influenza B: Same as 0.1% positivity reported the previous week (Dec. 23-29).

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

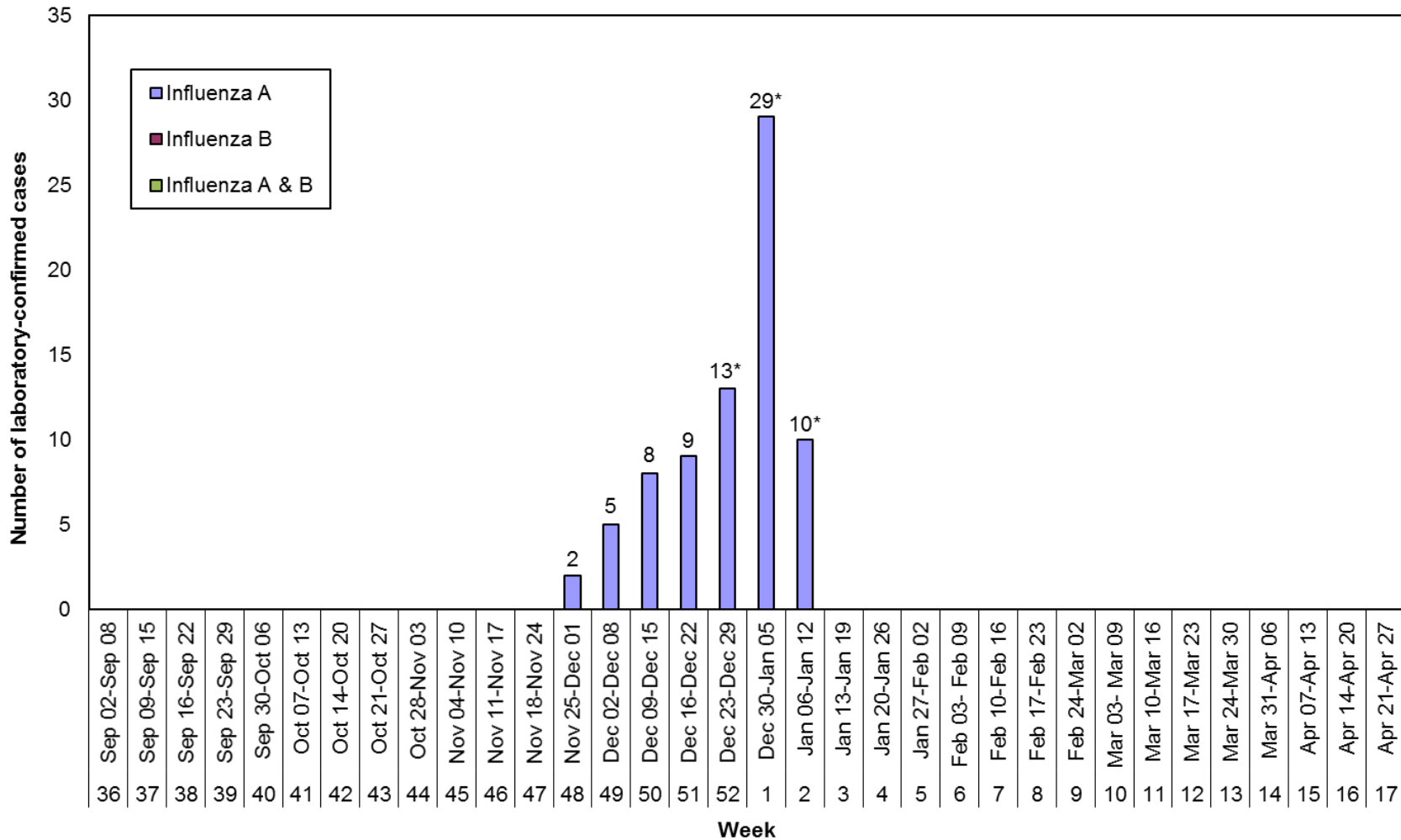
Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness	Jan. 6-12	An average of 9.9% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 28.5% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms.	Lower than 13.0% reported the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5). Lower than 39.6% reported the previous week (Dec. 30-Jan. 5).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Jan. 7-11	Twenty elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	No recent trends to report since this is the first week of school absenteeism data for 2019.

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 2018-2019 influenza season (N=76)



Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit internal influenza tracking database, extracted January 15, 2019.

† 'Influenza date' is the earliest of: symptom onset date, specimen collection date, and reported date. As a result, 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.