
2019-2020 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

Update of Current Status

December 11th, 2019

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in London and Middlesex County remains low. Other regions of Ontario are reporting sporadic influenza activity, with confirmed cases of both influenza A and influenza B.

Analysis and Action

While Ontario's influenza season is off to a slow start, it has certainly begun. If they haven't already done so, local residents are encouraged to get 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 protection. By getting their flu shot now, local residents would be better protected against influenza when gathering together with family and friends over the Holiday season. Being vaccinated would also prevent them from being able to transmit influenza to others.

Regardless of the level of local influenza activity, there are a number of easy-to-follow steps that local 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, 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 1st and December 7th there was one laboratory-confirmed case of influenza A reported to the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

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

In this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, Public Health Ontario states that influenza activity across the province is low, but higher when compared to what had been reported the previous week. Both influenza A and influenza B have been reported in the most recent week of influenza surveillance.

In this week's *FluWatch*, the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that 71% of cases identified so far this season are influenza A, with 71% of subtyped specimens being the A(H3N2) strain. Influenza B has been identified in 29% of cases this season, which is higher than usual for this time of year. The greatest percentage of influenza A(H3N2) cases (43%) have been among those aged 65 and over, while 90% of influenza B cases have been among those 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
December 1st to December 7th, 2019

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</i> <i>(from September 1, 2019)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases ^{1,4}	Dec. 1-7 (week 49) ²	Influenza A – 1 case Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 3 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Nov. 24-30) when one case was reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Nov. 24-30) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types ¹	Dec. 1-7	Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 0 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 1 case	Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 2 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 1 case	
Hospitalizations ^{1,5}	Dec. 1-7	1	2	Same as the previous week (Nov. 24-30) when one hospitalization was reported.
Deaths ^{1,5}	Dec. 1-7	0	0	Same as the previous week (Nov. 24-30) when no deaths were reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Dec. 1-7	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Nov. 24-30) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Nov. 24-30) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³	Nov. 24-30 (week 48) ²	Influenza A – 2.7% positivity Influenza B – 1.1% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Higher than 2.1% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 17-23). Influenza B: Similar to 0.6% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 17-23).

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	Dec. 1-7	An average of 8.1% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 27.7% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms.	Higher than 7.2% reported the previous week (Nov. 24-30). Higher than 22.3% reported the previous week (Nov. 24-30).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Dec. 2-6	Thirty-three elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	Higher than the previous week (Nov. 25-29) when 19 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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