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## 2019-2020 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### Final report of 2019

This is the final *Community Influenza Surveillance Report* of 2019. Reporting will resume on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### Overall Assessment

While the current level of influenza activity in London and Middlesex County remains low, the number of laboratory-confirmed flu cases reported to the Health Unit over the last week has increased. Other regions of Ontario are reporting sporadic and localized influenza activity, with confirmed cases of both influenza A and influenza B.

### Analysis and Action

While Ontario's influenza season started slowly, flu activity has been increasing each week since the beginning of November. If they haven't already done so, local residents are encouraged to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible, as it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide protection.

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 8<sup>th</sup> and December 14<sup>th</sup> there were five laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A and one of influenza B reported to the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Of the six influenza cases reported in this time period, three 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

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 67% of cases identified so far this season are influenza A, with 70% of subtyped specimens being the A(H3N2) strain. Influenza B has been identified in 33% of cases this season, which is higher than usual for this time of year. The greatest percentage of influenza A(H3N2) cases (44%) have been among those aged 65 and over, while 92% 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 8<sup>th</sup> to December 14<sup>th</sup>, 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 (from September 1, 2019)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases <sup>1,4</sup>	Dec. 8-14 (week 50) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 5 cases Influenza B – 1 case	Influenza A – 8 cases Influenza B – 1 case	Influenza A: <b>Higher</b> than the previous week (Dec. 1-7) when one case was reported.  Influenza B: <b>Higher</b> than the previous week (Dec. 1-7) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types <sup>1</sup>	Dec. 8-14	Influenza A (H3) – 1 case Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 2 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 2 cases  Influenza B not yet subtyped – 1 case	Influenza A (H3) – 1 case Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 5 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 2 cases  Influenza B not yet subtyped – 1 case	
Hospitalizations <sup>1,5</sup>	Dec. 8-14	3	5	<b>Higher</b> than the previous week (Dec. 1-7) when one hospitalization was reported.
Deaths <sup>1,5</sup>	Dec. 8-14	0	0	<b>Same</b> as the previous week (Dec. 1-7) when no deaths were reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Dec. 8-14	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Dec. 1-7) when no outbreaks were reported.  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Dec. 1-7) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) <sup>3</sup>	Dec. 1-7 (week 49) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 4.3% positivity Influenza B – 1.2% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: <b>Higher</b> than 2.7% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 24-30).  Influenza B: <b>Similar</b> to 1.1% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 24-30).

**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
<b>Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness</b>	Dec. 8-14	Data not available.	Data not available.
<b>Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism &gt; 10%)</b>	Dec. 9-13	Twenty-nine elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	<b>Lower</b> than the previous week (Dec. 2-6) when 33 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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