
2019-2020 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status January 15th, 2020

Overall Assessment

Influenza activity in the Middlesex-London region is moderate, with both influenza A and B cases being reported to the Health Unit from across the London and Middlesex region.

Analysis and Action

Ontario's influenza season is well under way, with flu activity being reported from across the province. If they haven't already done so, local residents are encouraged to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible, since 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 January 5th and 11th, there were 23 influenza A and 6 influenza B cases reported, 11 of whom were hospitalized. There were no deaths reported, or outbreaks declared, during the last reporting week of surveillance.

Appendix A provides more detail about laboratory-based influenza activity indicators for the most recent reporting week, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness. A graph showing all 105 laboratory-confirmed cases by week of illness onset is provided at the end of this report in Appendix B.

Provincial and National Comparison

In the most recent *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin* (covering December 29th to January 4th), Public Health Ontario states that influenza levels are higher when compared to previous weeks. Activity is moderate for influenza A and low for influenza B.

In the most recent *FluWatch* (covering December 15th to January 4th), the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that influenza A(H3N2), A(H1N1), and influenza B are co-circulating. So far this season, 57% of cases identified have been influenza A, with 53% of subtyped specimens being the A(H3N2) strain. The greatest percentage of influenza A(H3N2) cases (46%) have been among those aged 65 and over, while influenza A(H1N1) cases have been distributed among adults 20 to 44 years old, 45 to 64 years old, and those 65 years of age and older, with each age group accounting for approximately 28% of cases. Influenza B has been identified in 43% of cases this season; 89% have been among people 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 January 5th to January 11th, 2020

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 ^{1,4}	Jan. 5-11 (week 2) ²	Influenza A – 23 cases Influenza B – 6 cases	Influenza A – 75 cases Influenza B – 30 cases	Influenza A: Higher than the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when 14 cases were reported. Influenza B: Lower than the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when 13 cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types ¹	Jan. 5-11	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 5 cases Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 18 cases Influenza B not yet subtyped – 6 cases	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 26 cases Influenza A (H3) – 4 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 45 cases Influenza B not yet subtyped – 30 cases	
Hospitalizations ^{1,5}	Jan. 5-11	11	42	Higher than the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when four hospitalizations were reported.
Deaths ^{1,5}	Jan. 5-11	0	2	Lower than the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when one death was reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Jan. 5-11	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks Influenza A & B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 2 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks Influenza A & B – 1 outbreak	Influenza A: Lower than the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when one outbreak was reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza A & B Same as the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³	Dec. 29-Jan. 4 (week 1) ²	Influenza A – 20.4% positivity Influenza B – 4.1% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Higher than 16.6% positivity reported the previous week (Dec. 22-28). Influenza B: Similar to 4.3% positivity reported the previous week (Dec. 22-28).

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

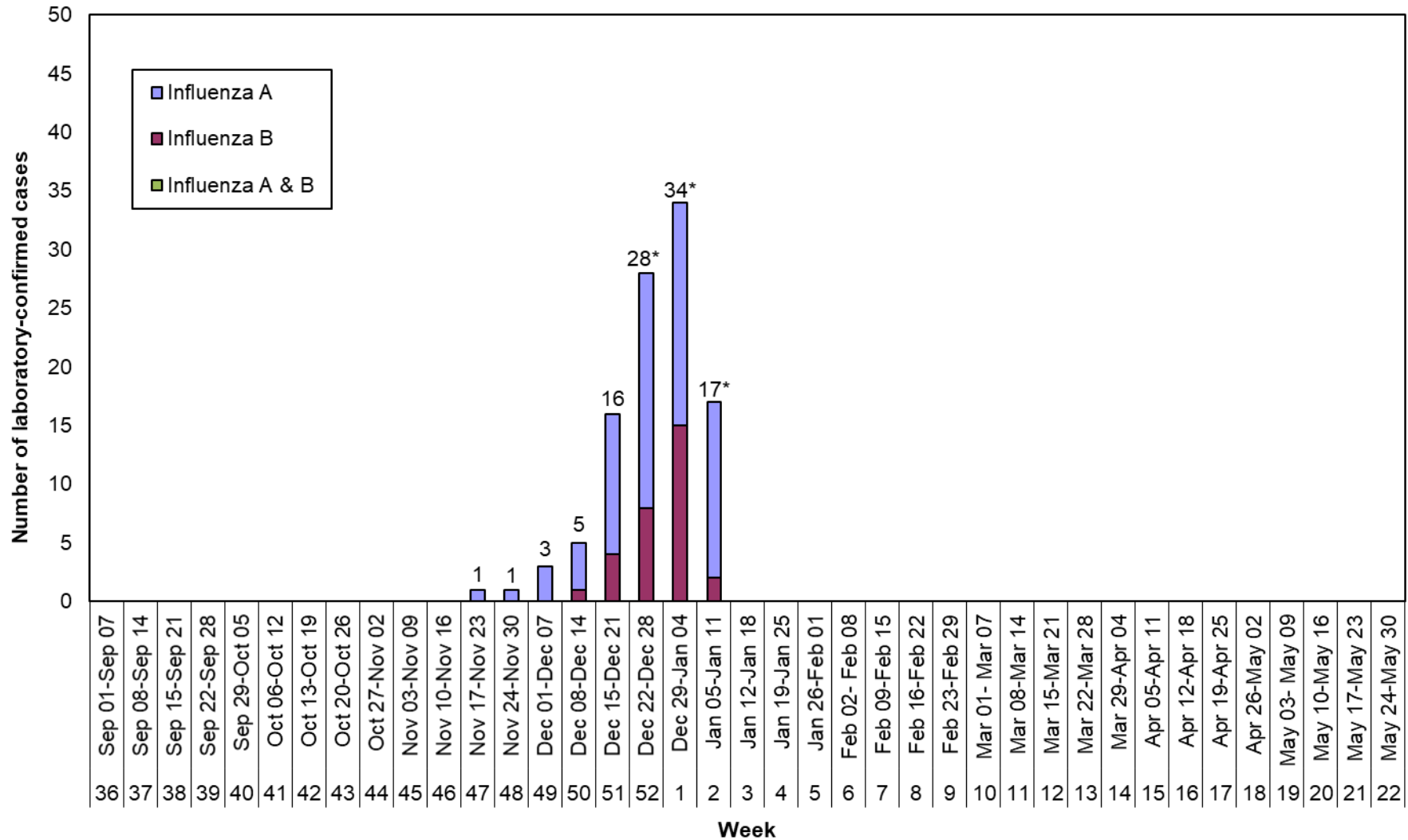
Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness	Jan. 5-11	An average of 11.9% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the paediatric emergency department, where 32.1% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms.	Lower than 16.4% reported the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4). Lower than 41.1% reported the previous week (Dec. 29-Jan. 4).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Jan. 6-10	Thirty-three elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	Schools were closed from Dec. 23, 2019 to Jan. 3, 2020, therefore recent absenteeism trends are not yet available.

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 2019-2020 influenza season (N=105)



Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit internal influenza tracking database, extracted January 14, 2020.

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