
2019-2020 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

Update of Current Status

March 18th, 2020

Overall Assessment

When compared to earlier in the season, current level of influenza activity in the Middlesex-London region appears to be continuing to decline. However, the Health Unit continues to receive reports of both influenza A and B cases from across the City of London and Middlesex County.

Analysis and Action

The influenza season continues in Ontario, with flu activity being reported across the province. Regardless of the level of local influenza activity, there are some easy-to-follow steps that residents can always take to avoid becoming sick. Washing your hands with soap and warm water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, remain effective ways to prevent many illnesses, including influenza. Residents should also cover their coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently, and stay home when they feel sick and/or have a fever.

Details of Current Local Activity

Between March 8th and March 14th, there were seven influenza B and five influenza A cases reported to the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Among these cases, one person was hospitalized, and one death was reported. One influenza B outbreak was declared in a local facility during the most recent 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 334 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 March 1st to March 7th), Public Health Ontario states that influenza levels are lower when compared to previous weeks; activity is low for both influenza A and influenza B.

In the most recent *FluWatch* (covering March 1st to March 7th), the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that while both influenza A and B continue to be detected, both appeared to decrease in the most recent week. So far this season, 58% of cases identified have been influenza A, with 67% of subtyped specimens being the A(H1N1) 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 64 years old (51%) as well as seniors 65 year of age and older (29%). Influenza B has been identified in 42% of cases this season; 87% of these 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 March 8th to March 14th, 2020

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2019-2020 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: Current Reporting Period	Number Reported: Year to Date (from September 1, 2019)	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases ^{1, 4}	Mar. 8-14 (week 11) ²	Influenza A – 5 cases Influenza B – 7 cases	Influenza A – 218 cases Influenza B – 116 cases	Influenza A: Same as five cases reported the previous week (Mar. 1-7). Influenza B: Lower than 10 cases reported the previous week (Mar. 1-7).
Influenza sub-types ¹	Mar. 8-14	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 3 cases Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 2 cases Influenza B not yet subtyped – 7 cases	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 51 cases Influenza A (H3) – 6 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 161 cases Influenza B not yet subtyped – 116 cases	
Hospitalizations ^{1, 5}	Mar. 8-14	1	156	Lower than seven hospitalizations reported the previous week (Mar. 1-7).
Deaths ^{1, 5}	Mar. 8-14	1	11	Same as the previous week (Mar. 1-7), when one death was reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Mar. 8-14	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 1 outbreak Influenza A & B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 6 outbreaks Influenza B – 1 outbreak Influenza A & B – 1 outbreak	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Mar. 1-7) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza B: Higher than the previous week (Mar. 1-7) when no outbreaks were reported. Influenza A & B Same as the previous week (Mar. 1-7) when no outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³	Mar. 1-7 (week 10) ²	Influenza A – 6.9% positivity Influenza B – 6.2% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Lower than 8.3% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 23-29). Influenza B: Higher than 5.6% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 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 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

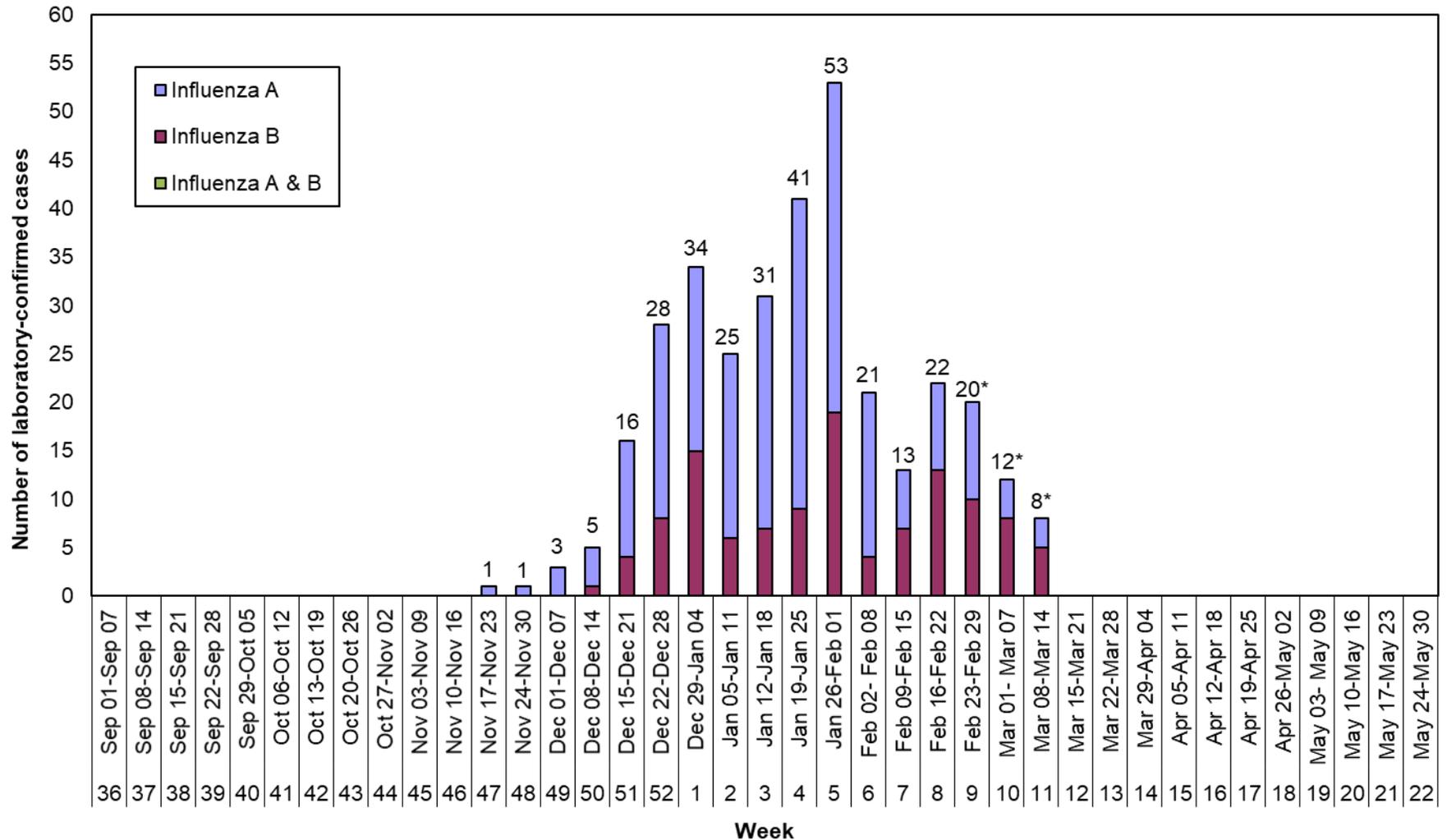
Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness	Mar. 8-14	An average of 11.6% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the paediatric emergency department, where 25.7% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms.	Higher than 9.4% reported the previous week (Mar. 1-7). Same as 25.7% reported the previous week (Mar. 1-7).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Mar. 9-13	Data not available.	Recent data not 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=334)



Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit internal influenza tracking database, extracted March 18, 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.