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## 2020-2021 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

### Update of Current Status

### December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

#### Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in London and Middlesex County continues to be low. There have been no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases identified in the Middlesex-London region since August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020; however, a few other regions in Ontario have reported sporadic influenza activity this season.

Important COVID-19 note: the effects of Public Health measures such as physical distancing, handwashing and the wearing of masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, may reduce the transmission of other respiratory viruses, like influenza, in the community.

#### Analysis and Action

The influenza season in Ontario has begun. If they haven't done so already, local residents are encouraged to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible, well in advance of peak influenza activity.

Regardless of the level of local influenza activity, there are a number of easy-to-follow steps local residents can take to avoid becoming sick throughout the year. While washing your hands with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds or using a waterless hand sanitizer (with at least 70 percent alcohol content), remain effective ways to prevent many illnesses, including influenza, local residents should continue to follow recommended COVID-19 prevention practices such as:

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow,
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs frequently,
- Stay home when feeling sick,
- Limit interactions to only those who are part of the same household,
- Maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other people, and
- Wear a mask in enclosed places, or where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

#### Details of Current Local Activity

Between November 29<sup>th</sup> and December 5<sup>th</sup> there were no laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported to the Health Unit; nor have there been any laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported in the Middlesex-London region since the beginning of the influenza surveillance season on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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* (covering November 22<sup>nd</sup> to November 28<sup>th</sup>), Public Health Ontario states that influenza activity in health units across the province is similar compared to the previous week. In the most recent week, activity was low for both influenza A and influenza B.

In this week's *FluWatch*, the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that so far this season, influenza activity remains exceptionally low for this time of year compared to the previous four seasons with no evidence of community circulation of influenza.

- 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**  
**November 29<sup>nd</sup> to December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2020-2021 influenza surveillance season**

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Number Reported: <i>Year to Date</i> <i>(from August 30, 2020)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases <sup>1,4</sup>	Nov. 29-Dec. 5 (week 49) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Nov. 22-Nov. 28) when no cases were reported.  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Nov. 22-Nov. 28) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types <sup>1</sup>	Nov. 29-Dec. 5	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Hospitalizations <sup>1,5</sup>	Nov. 29-Dec. 5	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Deaths <sup>1,5</sup>	Nov. 29-Dec. 5	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Nov. 29-Dec. 5	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	No local institutional influenza outbreaks declared to date.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) <sup>3</sup>	Nov. 22 – Nov. 28 (week 48) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0% positivity Influenza B – 0.1% positivity	NA	Influenza A: <b>Same</b> as 0% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 15-Nov. 21).  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as 0.1% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 15-Nov. 21).

**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](#) 2020-2021.

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, 2020-2021 influenza surveillance season**

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
Middlesex-London hospital emergency department visits - percentage of patients with respiratory or fever symptoms <sup>1</sup>	Nov. 29-Dec. 5	<p>An average of 3.3% of patients presented with respiratory symptoms.</p> <p>An average of 2.0% of patients presented with influenza-like illness (fever) symptoms.</p>	<p><b>Lower</b> than 4.1% reported the previous week (Nov. 22-Nov. 28).</p> <p><b>Slightly Higher</b> than 1.8% reported the previous week (Nov. 22–Nov. 28).</p>
Real-time Viral Respiratory Surveillance <sup>2</sup> - Middlesex-London	Nov. 29-Dec. 5	Activity/Risk Level: Low or <b>Green</b> (No significant impacts on acute care sector).	<b>Same (Low)</b> as previous week (Nov. 22-Nov. 28).

<sup>1</sup> [Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance](#) (ACES) Application is a real-time syndromic surveillance system. This source will be influenced by COVID-19 activity.

<sup>2</sup> [Viral Respiratory Mapper](#) uses data from ACES (above). Activity/Risk Levels range from Green, Yellow, Orange and Red.

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