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## 2020-2021 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### First report of 2021

This is the first Community Influenza Surveillance Report of 2021 and covers the two-week period that includes December 20<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> and December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.

### 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:

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

### Details of Current Local Activity

As this report covers two weeks of influenza surveillance, the details of local activity for each week are as follows:

- Between December 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, there were no laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported in the Middlesex-London region. There have been no local influenza cases reported since the beginning of the influenza surveillance season on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- Between December 27<sup>th</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup>, there were also no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases reported in the region.

Appendix A provides more detail about laboratory based influenza activity indicators for these reporting weeks, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness.

### Provincial and National Comparison

In last week's Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin (covering December 13<sup>th</sup> to December 19<sup>th</sup>), Public Health Ontario indicated that influenza activity in health units across the province was low but that it was higher compared to the previous week, with two influenza B cases being reported in Ontario.

In this week's Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin (covering December 20<sup>th</sup> to December 26<sup>th</sup>), Public Health Ontario indicates 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 (one case) and influenza B (zero cases) in Ontario.

In this week's FluWatch (covering December 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>), the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that so far this season, influenza activity remains exceptionally low for this time of year compared to previous seasons with no evidence of community circulation of influenza in Canada.

- 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 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**

**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
<b>Laboratory-confirmed cases<sup>1,4</sup></b>	Dec. 20-26 (week 52) <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 (Dec. 13-19) when no cases were reported.
	Dec. 27-Jan. 2 (week 53) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases		Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Dec. 13-19) when no cases were reported.
<b>Influenza sub-types<sup>1</sup></b>	Dec. 20-26 (week 52) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
	Dec. 27-Jan. 2 (week 53) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	
<b>Hospitalizations<sup>1,5</sup></b>	Dec. 20-26 (week 52) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
	Dec. 27-Jan. 2 (week 53) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	
<b>Deaths<sup>1,5</sup></b>	Dec. 20-26 (week 52) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
	Dec. 27-Jan. 2 (week 53) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	
<b>Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care</b>	Dec. 20-26 (week 52) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	No local institutional influenza outbreaks declared to date.
	Dec. 27-Jan. 2 (week 53) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	
<b>Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario)<sup>3</sup></b>	Dec. 13-Dec. 19 (week 51) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0% positivity Influenza B – 0% positivity	NA	Influenza A: <b>Lower</b> as 0.1% positivity reported the previous week (Dec. 6-Dec. 12).
	Dec. 20– Dec. 26 (week 52) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – NA Influenza B – NA	NA	Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as 0% positivity reported the previous week (Dec. 6-Dec. 12).  NA – Data not available this week

**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
<b>Middlesex-London hospital emergency department visits - percentage of patients with respiratory or fever symptoms<sup>1</sup></b>	Dec. 20-Dec. 26	An average of 4.7% of patients presented with respiratory symptoms.  An average of 2.0% of patients presented with influenza-like illness (fever) symptoms.	<b>Slightly Higher</b> than 4.2% reported the previous week (Dec. 13-Dec. 19).  <b>Slightly Higher</b> than 1.9% reported the previous week (Dec. 13-Dec. 19).
	Dec.27-Jan. 02, 2021	An average of 4.5% of patients presented with respiratory symptoms.  An average of 2.2% of patients presented with influenza-like illness (fever) symptoms.	<b>Slightly Lower</b> than 4.7% reported the previous week (Dec. 20-Dec. 26).  <b>Slightly Higher</b> than 2.0% reported the previous week (Dec. 20-Dec. 26).
<b>Real-time Viral Respiratory Surveillance<sup>2</sup> - Middlesex-London</b>	Dec. 20-Dec. 26	Activity/Risk Level: Low or <b>Green</b> (No significant impacts on acute care sector).	<b>Same (Low)</b> as previous week (Dec. 13-Dec. 19).
	Dec.27-Jan. 02, 2021	Activity/Risk Level: Low or <b>Green</b> (No significant impacts on acute care sector).	<b>Same (Low)</b> as previous week (Dec. 20-Dec. 26).

<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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