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## 2020-2021 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

### Update of Current Status

### March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in London and Middlesex County continues to be low. No cases of laboratory-confirmed influenza have been identified in the Middlesex-London region since the beginning of this year's influenza surveillance season (August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020); however, there are a few regions in Ontario that have reported some 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 Health Unit continues to encourage local residents who have not yet received their seasonal influenza vaccine to do so as soon as possible, as it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide optimal protection against the flu.

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 with other people to only 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 you feel sick.

#### Details of Current Local Activity

Between February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 6<sup>th</sup>, no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported to the Health Unit nor have there been any reported in the Middlesex-London region since the beginning of this year's influenza surveillance season (August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

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 this week's Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin (covering February 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>), Public Health Ontario indicated that influenza activity in health units across the province was higher than the previous week, with two laboratory-confirmed influenza A cases reported in Ontario.

In this week's FluWatch (covering February 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<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**  
**February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 6<sup>th</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
Laboratory-confirmed cases <sup>1, 4</sup>	Feb. 28-Mar. 6 (week 9) <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 (Feb. 21-27) when no cases were reported.  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Feb. 21-27) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types <sup>1</sup>	Feb. 28-Mar. 6 (week 9) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Hospitalizations <sup>1, 5</sup>	Feb. 28-Mar. 6 (week 9) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Deaths <sup>1, 5</sup>	Feb. 28-Mar. 6 (week 9) <sup>2</sup>	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Feb. 28-Mar. 6 (week 9) <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.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) <sup>3</sup>	Feb. 21-27 (week 8) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 0% positivity Influenza B – 0% positivity	NA	Influenza A: <b>Same</b> as 0% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 14-20).  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as 0% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 14-20).

**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>	Feb. 28-Mar. 6	<p>An average of 3.1% of patients presented with respiratory symptoms.</p> <p>An average of 1.8% of patients presented with influenza-like illness (fever) symptoms.</p>	<p><b>Slightly Higher</b> than 2.9% reported the previous week (Feb. 21-27).</p> <p><b>Slightly Higher</b> than 1.4% reported the previous week (Feb. 21-27).</p>
Real-time Viral Respiratory Surveillance <sup>2</sup> - Middlesex-London	Feb. 28-Mar. 6	Activity/Risk Level: Low or <b>Green</b> (No significant impacts on acute care sector).	<b>Same (Low)</b> as previous week (Feb. 21-27).

<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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