
2018-2019 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status November 7th, 2018

First Report of the 2018-2019 Season

The 2018-2019 influenza season is underway and the Middlesex-London Health Unit is once again pleased to provide its weekly *Community Influenza Surveillance Report*.

The *Community Influenza Surveillance Report* is one of the Health Unit's most important means of communication with health professionals, community partners, media, and the community at large to provide up-to-date information about influenza and respiratory illness in London and Middlesex County during the influenza season. These reports are released each Wednesday during influenza season and include an overall assessment, details of the current level of influenza activity, and links to useful information.

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in Middlesex-London is low. To date, there have been no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases identified in the Middlesex-London region, however other regions of Ontario are reporting sporadic and localized activity.

Analysis and Action

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

Regardless of the level of influenza activity in the community, local residents can take a number of steps to avoid becoming sick all through 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 October 28th and November 3rd there were no laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported to the Health Unit. Similarly, since the beginning of the influenza surveillance season on September 1st, there have been no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases reported to the Health Unit.

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

Useful Websites

- The latest Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin, issued by Public Health Ontario (PHO), is available at <http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/SurveillanceServices/Pages/Ontario-Respiratory-Virus-Bulletin.aspx>
- 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 October 28th to November 3rd, 2018

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2018-2019 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Number Reported: <i>Year to Date (from September 1, 2018)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases ^{1,4}	Oct. 28-Nov. 3 (week 44) ²	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Oct. 21-27) when no cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Oct. 21-27) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types ¹	Oct. 28-Nov. 3	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Hospitalizations ^{1,5}	Oct. 28-Nov. 3	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Deaths ^{1,5}	Oct. 28-Nov. 3	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Oct. 28-Nov. 3	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	No local institutional outbreaks declared to date.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³	Oct. 21-27 (week 43) ²	Influenza A – 1.1% positivity Influenza B – 0.5% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Lower than 1.5% positivity reported the previous week (Oct. 14-20). Influenza B: Higher than 0.0% positivity reported the previous week (Oct. 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 2018-2019

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, 2018-2019 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	Oct. 28-Nov. 3	An average of 5.9% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 19.7% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms.	Higher than 5.1% reported the previous week (Oct. 21-27). Higher than 16.1% reported the previous week (Oct. 21-27).
Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%)	Oct. 29-Nov. 2	Thirteen elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	Higher than the previous week (Oct. 22-26) when five elementary schools reported increased absenteeism.

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

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