
2018-2019 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

Update of Current Status

December 5th, 2018

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in Middlesex-London remains low. While there were no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases identified in London or Middlesex County during the current reporting period of November 25th to December 1st, cases are beginning to be reported as of the week of December 2nd. Further details about these cases will be provided in next week's report.

Analysis and Action

Ontario's influenza season is under way. The Health Unit is encouraging local residents who have not done so already, to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible. It is important to get the flu shot before the arrival of peak influenza activity, as it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide optimal protection against the flu.

Regardless of the local level of influenza activity, residents can take a number of steps to avoid becoming sick throughout the year. While washing your hands with soap and warm water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, remain effective ways of preventing 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 November 25th and December 1st there were no laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported to the Health Unit, however, cases have begun to be reported as of the week of December 2nd.

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

According to Public Health Ontario in this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, influenza A and influenza B activity across the province remains low, however, when compared to previous weeks, the level of activity continues to increase. Both influenza A and influenza B have been detected in Ontario, although the majority of positive specimens have been influenza A. Among the influenza A specimens that have been subtyped, 61.0% have been the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain, with the remaining subtyped specimens (39.0%) being A(H3).

The Public Health Agency of Canada's *FluWatch* reports that influenza activity continues to increase across Canada. The most common influenza virus identified is influenza A, with the majority of subtyped specimens being the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain.

- 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
November 25th to December 1st, 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</i> <i>(from September 1, 2018)</i> | Recent Trends |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Laboratory-confirmed cases ^{1,4} | Nov. 25-Dec. 1 (week 48) ² | Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases | Influenza A – 0 cases Influenza B – 0 cases | Influenza A: Same as the previous week (Nov. 18-24) when no cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Nov. 18-24) when no cases were reported. |
| Influenza sub-types ¹ | Nov. 25-Dec. 1 | 0 | 0 | No cases reported. |
| Hospitalizations ^{1,5} | Nov. 25-Dec. 1 | 0 | 0 | No cases reported. |
| Deaths ^{1,5} | Nov. 25-Dec. 1 | 0 | 0 | No cases reported. |
| Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care | Nov. 25-Dec. 1 | Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks | Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks | No institutional outbreaks declared. |
| Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³ | Nov. 18-24 (week 47) ² | Influenza A – 2.0% positivity Influenza B – 0.3% positivity | N/A | Influenza A: Similar to 2.2% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 11-17). Influenza B: Same as 0.3% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 11-17). |

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 | Nov. 25-Dec. 1 | An average of 8.3% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 27.7% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms. | Similar to 8.2% reported the previous week (Nov. 18-24). Higher than 25.2% reported the previous week (Nov. 18-24). |
| Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%) | Nov. 26-30 | Twenty-three elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%. | Higher than the previous week (Nov. 19-23) when 21 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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