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## 2018-2019 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### Overall Assessment

Influenza continues to circulate in the Middlesex-London region, with cases being reported across the City of London and Middlesex County.

### Analysis and Action

The Middlesex-London region, and Ontario in general, are well into the influenza season. The Health Unit encourages 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 that residents can take 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 February 24<sup>th</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup>, there were 20 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A reported to the Health Unit, as well as the season's first influenza B case. Among the 21 influenza cases reported last week, eight were hospitalized; the Health Unit was also notified of the death of a case who was previously reported.

Appendix A provides additional details about laboratory-based influenza activity indicators for the current reporting week, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness. A graph showing all 310 laboratory-confirmed cases by week of illness onset is provided at the end of this report in Appendix B.

### Provincial and National Comparison

In this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, Public Health Ontario states that influenza activity across the province was similar when compared to what had been reported the previous week. Influenza A activity across Ontario is moderate, while influenza B activity remains low. Among the influenza A specimens that have been subtyped this season, 73.9% have been the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain.

In this week's *FluWatch*, the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that to date this season, the most common influenza virus identified is influenza A, with 89% of subtyped specimens being the A(H1N1)pdm09 strain. The majority (85%) of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 cases have been among those under the age of 65 years, while 61% of all influenza A(H3N2) cases have been among those 65 years of age and over.

- 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 February 24<sup>th</sup> to March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

**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
<b>Laboratory-confirmed cases<sup>1,4</sup></b>	Feb. 24-Mar. 2 (week 9) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 21 cases Influenza B – 1 case	Influenza A – 309 cases Influenza B – 1 case	Influenza A: <b>Lower</b> than the previous week (Feb. 17-23) when 51 cases were reported.  Influenza B: <b>Higher</b> than the previous week (Feb. 17-23) when no cases were reported.
<b>Influenza sub-types<sup>1</sup></b>	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	Influenza A (H3) – 1 case Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 1 case Influenza A not yet subtyped – 18 cases  Influenza B not yet subtyped – 1 case	Influenza A (H3) – 11 cases Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 – 50 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 248 cases  Influenza B not yet subtyped – 1 case	
<b>Hospitalizations<sup>1,5</sup></b>	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	8	152	<b>Lower</b> than the previous week (Feb. 17-23) when 21 hospitalizations were reported.
<b>Deaths<sup>1,5</sup></b>	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	1	11	<b>Same</b> as the previous week (Feb. 17-23) when one death was reported.
<b>Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care</b>	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	Influenza A – 1 outbreak Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 16 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A: <b>Lower</b> than the previous week (Feb. 17-23) when two outbreaks were reported.  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as the previous week (Feb. 17-23) when no outbreaks were reported.
<b>Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario)<sup>3</sup></b>	Feb. 17-23 (week 8) <sup>2</sup>	Influenza A – 15.3% positivity Influenza B – 0.2% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: <b>Lower</b> than 17.5% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 10-16).  Influenza B: <b>Same</b> as 0.2% positivity reported the previous week (Feb. 10-16).

**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**

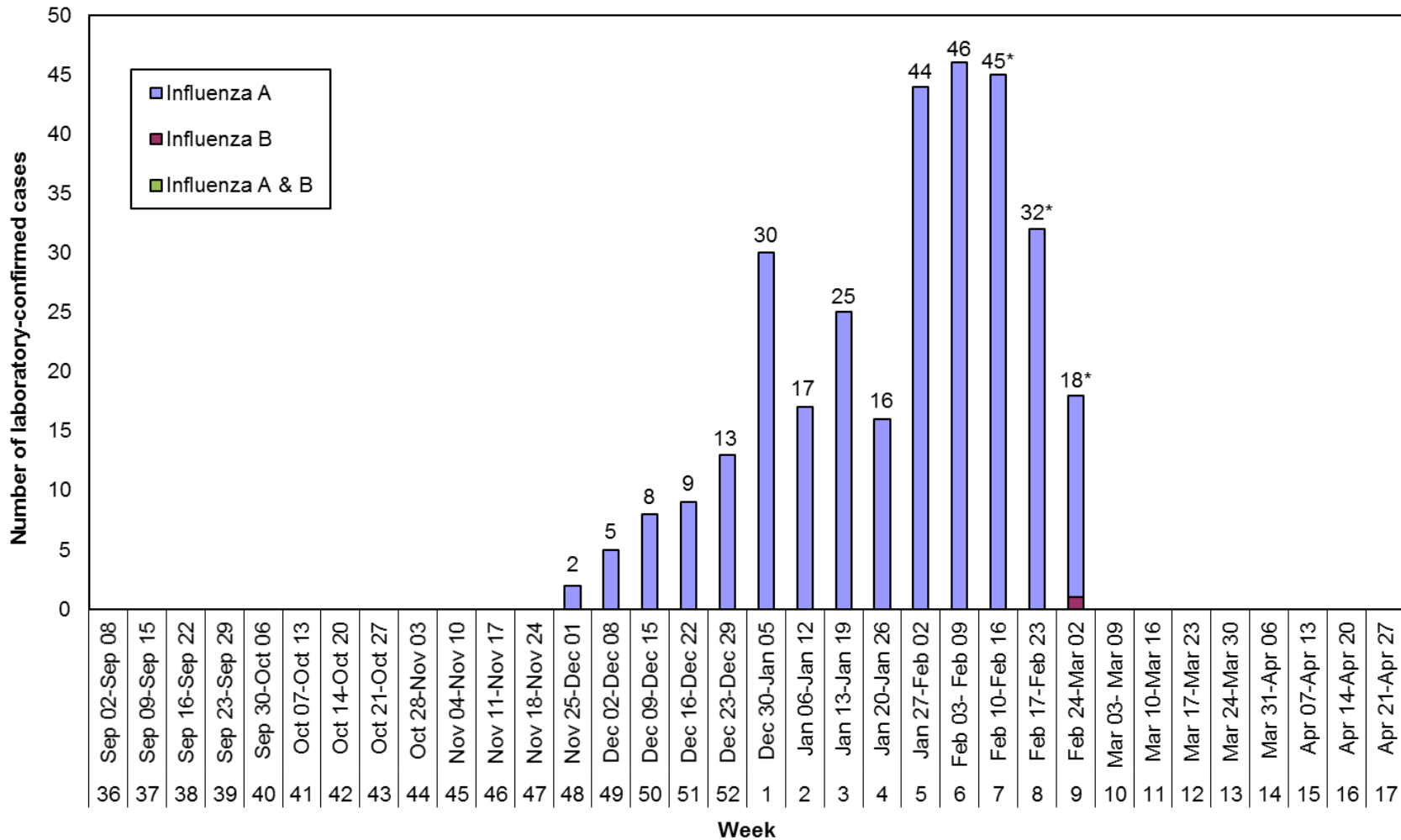
Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
<b>Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness</b>	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	An average of 8.2% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms.  The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 22.9% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms.	<b>Similar</b> to 8.6% reported the previous week (Feb. 17-23).  <b>Lower</b> than 26.8% reported the previous week (Feb. 17-23).
<b>Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism &gt; 10%)</b>	Feb. 25-Mar. 1	Thirty-two elementary schools from one school board reported average absenteeism (due to all causes) exceeding 10%.	<b>Higher</b> than the previous week (Feb. 18-22) when 31 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

## Appendix B

### Laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, by influenza date† Middlesex-London 2018-2019 influenza season (N=310)



Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit internal influenza case tracking database, extracted March 5, 2019.

† 'Influenza date' is the earliest of: symptom onset date, specimen collection date, and reported date. As a result, the weekly counts shown in this section differ from those provided in other sections of this report.

\* Counts may be incomplete and are subject to change due to the retrospective nature of reporting.