
2020-2021 Community Influenza Surveillance Report

Update of Current Status

November 25th, 2020

First Report of the 2020-2021 Season

The 2020-2021 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, local 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.

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.

Overall Assessment

The current level of influenza activity in London and Middlesex County is low. There have been no laboratory-confirmed influenza cases identified in the Middlesex-London region since August 30th, 2020; however, a few other regions of Ontario have reported sporadic influenza activity.

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:

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

Details of Current Local Activity

Between November 15th and November 21st there were no laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported to the Health Unit; nor have there been any laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported in the Middlesex-London region since the beginning of the influenza surveillance season on August 30th, 2020.

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

In this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, Public Health Ontario states that influenza activity in health units across the province is higher compared to the previous week. In the most recent week 0.2% (2/1160) of positive specimens were influenza A, and 0% (0/1160) were influenza B.

In this week's *FluWatch*, the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that so far this season, influenza activity remains exceptionally low for this time of year compared to the previous four seasons.

- 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
November 15th to November 21st, 2019

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2020-2021 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: Current Reporting Period	Number Reported: Year to Date (from August 30, 2020)	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases ^{1, 4}	Nov. 15-21 (week 47) 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. 8- Nov. 14) when no cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Nov. 8- Nov. 14) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types ¹	Nov. 15-21	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Hospitalizations ^{1, 5}	Nov. 15-21	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Deaths ^{1, 5}	Nov. 15-21	0	0	No local cases reported to date.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	Nov. 15-21	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) ³	Nov. 8 – Nov. 14 (week 46) ²	Influenza A – 0.2% positivity Influenza B – 0% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Similar as 0.2% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 1-7). Influenza B: Similar to 0% positivity reported the previous week (Nov. 1-7).

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 symptoms¹	Nov. 15-21	<p>An average of 4.4% of patients presented with respiratory symptoms.</p> <p>An average of 1.6% of patients presented with influenza-like illness (fever) symptoms.</p>	<p>Slightly Lower than 4.6% reported the previous week (Nov. 8-Nov. 14).</p> <p>Slightly Lower than 2.0% reported the previous week (Nov. 8–Nov. 14).</p>
Real-time Viral Respiratory Surveillance² - Middlesex-London	Nov. 15-21	Activity/Risk Level: Low or Green (No significant impacts on acute care sector).	Same (Low) as previous week (Nov. 8-Nov. 14).

¹ [Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance](#) (ACES) Application is a real-time syndromic surveillance system. This source will be influenced by COVID-19 activity.

² [Viral Respiratory Mapper](#) uses data from ACES (above). Activity/Risk Levels range from Green, Yellow, Orange and Red.

This page intentionally blank.