
2017-2018 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status February 7, 2018

Overall assessment

The level of influenza activity continues to be high in the Middlesex-London region.

Analysis and Action

The current influenza season is proving to be a severe one in both the Middlesex-London area and across Canada, with numerous laboratory-confirmed cases, hospitalizations, and institutional outbreaks reported. To date, the number and proportion of influenza B cases has been higher than expected, with influenza B identified in nearly two-thirds of reported cases and institutional outbreaks.

Quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (QIV) is now available to, and recommended for, all unimmunized individuals in the Middlesex-London region, rather than the trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV). All unimmunized hospital, long-term care and retirement home staff in the Middlesex-London region are a high priority for immunization. Local residents who have not yet received their seasonal influenza immunization are encouraged to do so. There is no evidence to support the need to re-vaccinate individuals who have already received TIV.

In addition to getting immunized, local residents can take a number of other steps to prevent becoming sick. Handwashing is an effective way to prevent many illnesses, including influenza. Local residents should stay home when they feel sick, cover coughs and sneezes, and clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently.

Details of Current Local Activity

Between January 28th and February 3rd, 28 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza A and 37 cases of influenza B were reported to the Health Unit. As well, there were 30 hospitalizations and four deaths reported. Please note that due to the retrospective nature of reporting, the week in which hospitalizations and deaths are reported to the Health Unit may not be the same as the week in which they occurred.

Since September 1st, 2017, there have been 172 laboratory-confirmed influenza A cases, 323 cases of influenza B, and two cases infected with both influenza A and B, reported to the Health Unit. Among these cases there have been 244 hospitalizations and 23 deaths. During this same time period, there have been 14 influenza A outbreaks, 23 influenza B outbreaks, and four outbreaks with both influenza A and B declared in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and retirement homes.

Appendix A provides more detail about laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness. A graph showing all 497 laboratory-confirmed cases by week of illness onset is provided at the end of this report in Appendix B.

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/>.
- To find a free flu shot clinic near you, visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's "Get the flu shot" web page at <http://www.ontario.ca/page/get-flu-shot/>.

Appendix A

Summary of Community Influenza Surveillance Indicators for Middlesex-London January 28th to February 3rd, 2018

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2017-2018 influenza surveillance season

| Indicator | Reporting Period | Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i> | Number Reported: <i>Year to Date (from September 1, 2017)</i> | Recent Trends |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Laboratory-confirmed cases^{1,4} | Jan. 28-Feb. 3 (week 5) ² | Influenza A – 28 cases Influenza B – 37 cases | Influenza A – 172 cases Influenza B – 323 cases Influenza A & B – 2 cases | Influenza A: Higher than the previous week (Jan. 21-27) when 19 cases were reported. Influenza B: Lower than the previous week (Jan. 21-27) when 40 cases were reported. |
| Influenza sub-types¹ | Jan. 28-Feb. 3 | Influenza A(H3) – 10 cases Influenza A not subtyped – 18 cases Influenza B not subtyped – 37 cases | Influenza A – (H3) – 41 cases (H1N1)pdm09 – 1 case Not subtyped – 130 cases Influenza B – Phuket/3073/13-like – 1 case Not subtyped – 322 cases | |
| Hospitalizations^{1,5} | Jan. 28-Feb. 3 | 30 | 244 | Higher than the previous week (Jan. 21-27) when 29 hospitalizations were reported. |
| Deaths^{1,5} | Jan. 28-Feb. 3 | 4 | 23 | Lower than the previous week (Jan. 21-27) when five deaths were reported. |
| Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care | Jan. 28-Feb. 3 | Influenza A – 2 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks Influenza A&B – 0 outbreaks | Influenza A – 14 outbreaks Influenza B – 23 outbreaks Influenza A&B – 4 outbreaks | Influenza A: Higher than the previous week (Jan. 21-27) when one outbreak was reported. Influenza B: Lower than the previous week (Jan. 21-27) when three outbreaks were reported. |
| Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario)³ | Jan. 21-27 (week 4) ² | Influenza A – 15.8% positivity Influenza B – 13.0% positivity | N/A | Influenza A: Higher than 14.6% positivity reported in the previous reporting period (Jan. 14-20). Influenza B: Similar to 12.7% positivity reported in the previous reporting period (Jan. 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 2017-2018

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, 2017-2018 influenza surveillance season

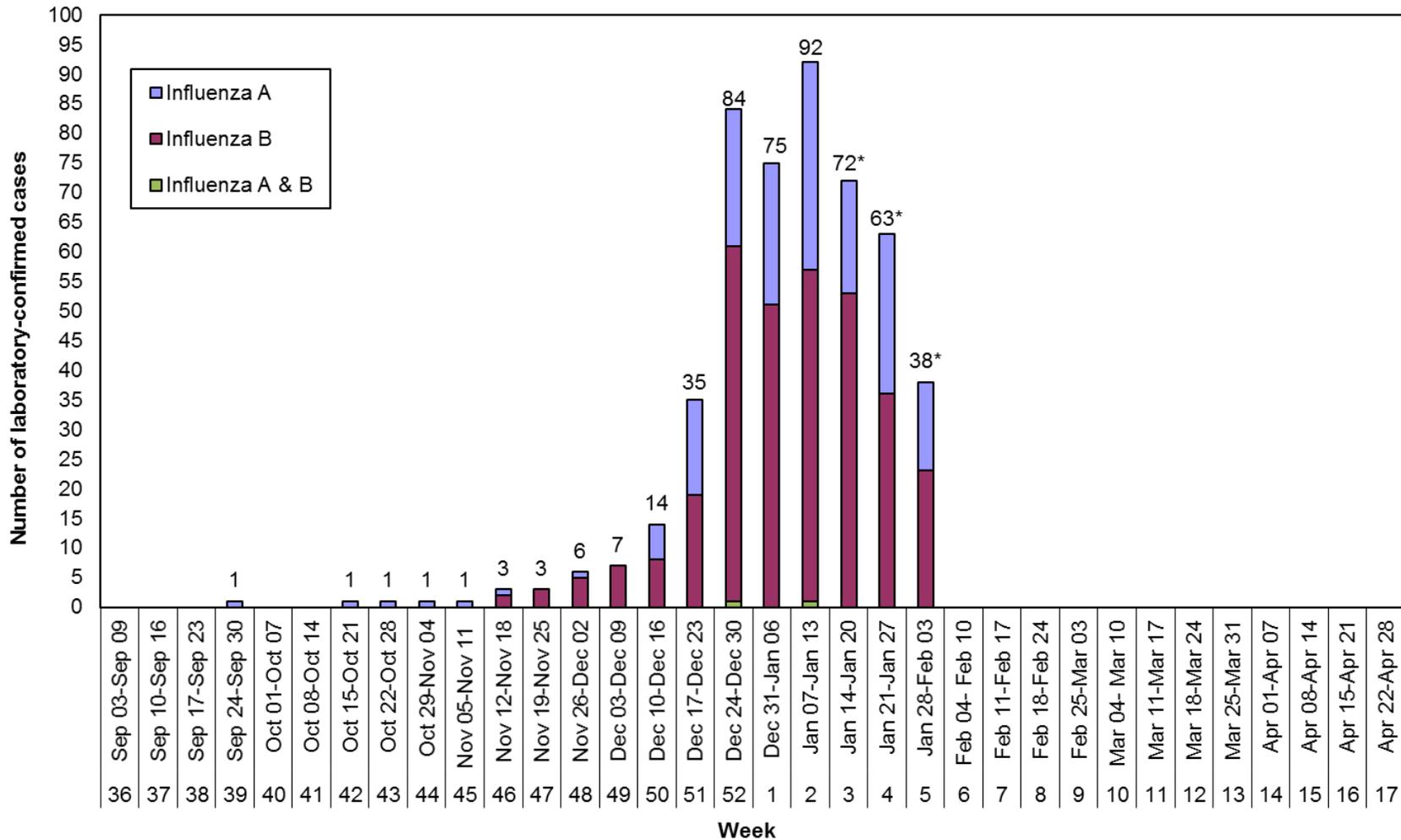
| Indicator | Reporting Period | Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i> | Recent Trends |
|--|------------------|--|---|
| Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness | Jan. 28-Feb. 3 | An average of 11.5% of patients presented with fever and respiratory symptoms. The proportion was highest at the pediatric emergency department, where 30.3% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory symptoms. | Similar to 11.2% reported the previous week (Jan. 21-27). Higher than 29.3% reported the previous week (Jan. 21-27). |
| Absence reports from elementary schools (i.e., absenteeism > 10%) | Jan. 29-Feb. 2 | Data not reported. | |

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 2017-2018 influenza season (N=497)



Data source: Middlesex-London Health Unit internal influenza tracking database, extracted February 6, 2018.

† '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.