

## Simcoe Muskoka No Longer in Widespread Influenza Activity

**Attention: Physicians, Long-Term Care Homes, Rest and Retirement Homes, Emergency Departments, Nurse Practitioners, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Professionals, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies**

**Date:** February 3, 2015

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Effective February 4, 2015, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is no longer experiencing community-wide influenza activity. Localized influenza activity is still occurring in the community and is defined by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) as “sporadically occurring ILI and lab-confirmed influenza together with outbreaks of ILI in schools and work sites, or laboratory-confirmed influenza in residential institutions occurring in < 50% of the health unit”.

### **Simcoe County and District of Muskoka**

Local influenza A activity has decreased significantly from the peak that occurred in early January 2015. **The numbers of influenza outbreaks, sporadic cases and emergency room visits for influenza-like illness are expected to return to winter baseline levels in the next couple of weeks, as this wave of influenza A activity ends. However, note that in some influenza seasons, an influenza B wave can occur later.**

As of February 2, 2015, there have been 42 lab-confirmed influenza A outbreaks and one lab-confirmed influenza B outbreak in Simcoe Muskoka since September 1, 2014. A total of 411 lab-confirmed influenza cases have been reported: 150 outbreak-related cases and 261 community cases. Approximately 32% of the local lab-confirmed influenza cases have been hospitalized and there have been seven local deaths caused by influenza.

The vast majority of circulating influenza A has been the H3N2 subtype. Note that there has been antigenic drift of the circulating H3N2 strain and thus the majority of H3N2 influenza specimens are not well-matched to the vaccine strain thus causing decreased vaccine effectiveness. Studies in the US have shown the effectiveness of the influenza vaccine this season to be around 25% at this time.

Prescribers may continue to receive requests for Tamiflu prophylaxis. As per the MOHLTC guidelines, unimmunized staff working in institutions experiencing confirmed influenza outbreaks are required to take Tamiflu prophylaxis at 75 mg once daily until the outbreak is over. In addition, due to the H3N2 drift, any vaccinated staff working in the above-noted institutions are recommended to take Tamiflu prophylaxis until the outbreak is over. Canadian guidelines on the use of antiviral drugs for influenza are available at <http://www.ammi.ca/guidelines>.

All lab-confirmed influenza cases and institutional respiratory outbreaks are reportable to public health to ensure timely follow-up. For additional information or to report influenza cases and respiratory outbreaks please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Communicable Disease Team at (705)721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8809.