

Increasing Influenza Activity: Predominantly H3N2 Potential Peak in Two to Three Weeks

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Nurse Practitioners, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Professionals, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, NSM LHIN, Central LHIN, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, Muskoka Paramedic Services, Rama Mnjikaning

Date: December 14, 2017

Influenza A (H3N2) has been the predominant circulating influenza virus this season so far but we are also seeing some cases of Influenza B. The upward trend of influenza activity is earlier this year compared to previous years.

Locally to date there have been 42 lab confirmed influenza A cases in Simcoe Muskoka compared to five lab-confirmed cases at the same time last year. There has also been five lab confirmed influenza B cases compared to zero at this time last year. Additionally, there have been four institutional influenza outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka to date. The percent positivity for influenza A testing in Simcoe Muskoka is increasing. Locally, for week 48, 18.2%, percent positivity for influenza A was reported while influenza B was 2.3%. These numbers are higher than the provincial reported rates of 6.4% and 1.4% respectively.

The peak of this first wave of influenza is predicted to be within the next two to three weeks, around the holiday season.

While annual vaccination is the best tool for prevention of influenza and its complications, antiviral drugs are also used as prophylaxis for residents in institutions that are experiencing an influenza outbreak. Treatment with antiviral drugs is a potential second line of defense for those who become ill to reduce morbidity and mortality. Public Health Ontario has a detailed fact sheet on the use of antivirals, both for treatment and prevention:

http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Antiviral_Medication_Influenza_Fact_Sheet.pdf

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.

Additional Information on Influenza

1. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Influenza information can be accessed at:
<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Immunization/flu.aspx>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada, Issues of FluWatch can be accessed at:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>
3. NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccination for the 2017-18 season can be accessed at:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-statement-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-2017-2018.html>
4. Public Health Ontario now issues the Ontario Respiratory Virus Bulletin which can be accessed at:
<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/SurveillanceServices/Pages/Ontario-Respiratory-Virus-Bulletin.aspx>

