

Simcoe Muskoka No Longer in Widespread Influenza Activity

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

Date: February 26, 2018

Effective February 23, 2018, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is no longer experiencing community-widespread influenza activity. Localized influenza activity is still occurring in the community and is defined by Public Health Ontario as “multiple ongoing laboratory-confirmed influenza outbreaks in institutions separated by some geographic distance, in other words, non-adjacent areas”.

Local influenza A and B activity has decreased but is still prevalent in the community. **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 activity ends. Influenza B activity was unusually early this year, and coincided with peak influenza A activity this season. Influenza B activity continues to have higher than expected levels for this time of year.** The current predominant B strain is not included in this year’s adult influenza vaccine. It is however included in the quadrivalent influenza vaccine that contains two influenza B strains, and is funded and recommended for those under 18 years of age.

The majority of circulating influenza A has been the H3N2 (69%) subtype followed by H1N1 (31%). The majority of the circulating influenza B has been the Phuket/3073/13-like strain (96%).

As of February 23, 2018, there have been 34 lab-confirmed influenza A outbreaks, 13 lab-confirmed influenza B outbreaks and two combined influenza A & B outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka since September 1, 2017. A total of 676 lab-confirmed influenza cases have been reported: 157 outbreak-related cases and 519 community cases. Approximately 42% of the local lab-confirmed influenza cases have been hospitalized and there have been three local deaths caused by influenza.

Consider timely administration of antivirals, to persons at high-risk for influenza complications presenting with influenza symptoms, regardless of immunization status, particularly in the coming weeks when it is expected that influenza activity will increase and peak. Public Health Ontario has a detailed fact sheet on the use of antivirals, both for treatment and prevention available at: [http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Antiviral Medications Influenza Fact Sheet.pdf](http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Antiviral_Medications_Influenza_Fact_Sheet.pdf)
The Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada have posted guidelines and an algorithm available at: https://www.ammi.ca/Content/Guidelines/Flu_Algorithm.pdf .

Persons who are not immunized with the influenza vaccine, and are working in institutions experiencing confirmed influenza outbreaks, are required to take Oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) prophylaxis, 75mg once daily until the outbreak is over if they want to continue to work in the facility.

More details on the control of respiratory outbreaks are available at:
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/flu/guide.aspx>

Local weekly Simcoe Muskoka surveillance information is available at:
www.smdhu.org/WeeklyFluNews

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.