

Health **FAX**

Increasing Influenza Activity: Predominantly H1N1

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, Medavie EMS Ontario – Muskoka, Rama Mnjikaning EMS**

Date: December 31, 2013

Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 has been the predominant circulating influenza virus this season. H1N1 tends to disproportionately affect children and young adults, similar to what occurred during the 2009 pandemic. However, we are not anticipating the situation to be as significant as in 2009, due to immunity for a proportion of the population due to previous infection and the excellent match to this year's seasonal flu vaccine.

Locally, there have been 29 laboratory-confirmed influenza A cases in Simcoe Muskoka to date, compared to 154 lab-confirmed cases at the same time last year. Additionally, there have been no influenza outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka. The percent positivity for influenza A testing in Simcoe Muskoka is lower than in Ontario (15.6% compared to 16.8%). Furthermore, the percent positivity to date is lower than this time last year.

The peak of this first wave of influenza is predicted to be around early to mid-January, predominantly H1N1, with a lower magnitude of activity compared to last year. The vaccine match to circulating strains is excellent so far (95.7% nationally) – so keep vaccinating.

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. For current recommendations related to the use of influenza antivirals for the 2013-14 season, please refer to the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada guidelines found at <http://www.ammi.ca/guidelines>

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. NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccination for the 2013-2014 season can be accessed at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/13vol39/acs-dcc-4/index-eng.php>
3. 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>