

Influenza season is not quite over yet: Influenza B wave has arrived and could last another 4 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, Medavie EMS Ontario – Muskoka, Rama Mnjikaning EMS

Date: April 9, 2014

Influenza B confirmed case counts have been increasing in the past two weeks and are likely peaking at this time. Locally this season, there have been 58 laboratory-confirmed influenza B cases with 30 of those cases reported in the past two weeks. In the last week, about 20% of all swabs tested for influenza have tested positive for influenza B. **This B wave could last up to another 4 weeks. There are currently four laboratory- confirmed influenza B institutional outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka** and very little influenza A activity. Clinically, influenza B presents similarly to influenza A.

This year's influenza vaccine is an excellent match to the predominant circulating B strain. 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>