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First Lab-Confirmed Influenza (A) Cases in Simcoe Muskoka

Attention: Physicians, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Occupational Health Professionals, Neighbouring Health Units, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, Muskoka Paramedic Services, Rama Mnjikaning EMS, Ontario Health, Home and Community Care Support Services, Midwives, Hospice, Group Homes, Indigenous Health Care & Community, Child Care Facilities, Corrections

Date: October 4, 2022

As of October 3, 2022, five laboratory-confirmed influenza cases have been reported to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) for the 2022-2023 season. Of the five individuals, four are children under the age of 12 years. **This is a much earlier arrival of the first influenza cases than previous years. First cases are generally detected in November.**

Influenza activity has started to be detected across Ontario. As of September 24, 2022, 17 of 34 health units have reported at least one case of influenza for the season to date. SMDHU will continue to analyze surveillance data and provide updates, as necessary.

The following is an update of the influenza activity in Ontario and Canada:

Ontario:

- As of September 24th (Week 38), 13 public health units are reporting sporadic activity and one public health unit is reporting localized activity. The overall assessment of influenza activity in Ontario is higher.

Canada:

- Respiratory virus detections remain low in Canada but are increasing. Activity of all viruses is near or below anticipated levels.
- Enterovirus/Rhinovirus remains the most common seasonal respiratory virus detected in Canada (796 detections: 23.3% positive). Activity is increasing but remains below anticipated levels for this time of year.
- Detections of other respiratory viruses are low, but activity is near anticipated levels.

SMDHU recommends getting immunized as soon as possible with any of the available age-appropriate influenza vaccines. Please refer to our recent [Influenza Immunization public health alert](#) for more details on when influenza vaccine will become available.

PHO laboratory testing will be consistent with last year's approach to [multiplex respiratory virus PCR \(MRVP\)](#) testing and will be available for:

1. symptomatic children (less than 18 years) seen in the Emergency Department (ED);
2. all symptomatic hospitalized patients (ward and ICU/CCU);
3. the first four symptomatic patient specimens in a respiratory outbreak; and
4. symptomatic patients tested in institutional settings (non-outbreak) when ordered on the PHO Laboratory requisition.

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MRVP testing includes influenza A, influenza A H3 subtype, influenza A H1 (pdm09) subtype, influenza B, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV A/B), parainfluenza (1 – 4), adenovirus, enterovirus, seasonal human coronavirus (OC43, 229E, NL63, HKU1), rhinovirus and human metapneumovirus.

MRVP testing requests for patients with acute respiratory illness (ARI), in the settings described above, must be clearly indicated on the requisition by selecting “Respiratory Viruses” or “COVID-19 Virus AND Respiratory Viruses” as appropriate in section 5 – “Test(s) Requested”. Only mark one of the three test request options. In addition, the patient’s setting and symptoms should be indicated on the requisition. For more information, please go to: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/virus-respiratory>

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, Infectious Diseases Team at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8809.

Additional Information on Influenza

1. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Influenza factsheet can be accessed at: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/DiseaseInformation/FactSheetsIL/Influenza.aspx>
2. ***NEW*** Public Health Ontario now issues an **interactive** Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin which can be accessed at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Infectious-Disease/Respiratory-Pathogens-Weekly>
3. Public Health Ontario: Influenza information can be accessed at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Diseases-and-Conditions/Infectious-Diseases/Respiratory-Diseases/Influenza>
4. Public Health Ontario, Influenza Antiviral Treatment can be accessed at: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/f/2020/fact-sheet--antiviral-medications-influenza.pdf?sc_lang=en
5. Public Health Ontario, Quick Reference - Antiviral Medications for Treatment of Influenza can be accessed at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/F/2019/fact-sheet-antiviral-medication-influenza.pdf>
6. Public Health Agency of Canada, Issues of FluWatch (first report posted October 7, 2022) can be accessed at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>
7. Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza & NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccination for the 2022-2023 season can be accessed at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/canadian-immunization-guide-statement-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-2022-2023.html>