

Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Colin Lee, Associate Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Lisa Simon, Associate Medical Officer of Health

High and Increasing Influenza (A) and On-Going High COVID-19 Activity and Outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka

Attention: Physicians, Hospitals, CNE, ER Manager, ER Physician, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Professionals, Community Health Centres, Walk-In Urgent Care Clinic, Nurse Practitioner, Ontario Health, Ontario Health Teams, Midwives, Family Health Team, Indigenous Healthcare & Community, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Neighbouring health Units, Paramedic Services, Child Care Facilities, Corrections

Date: January 11, 2024

As of January 9th, influenza activity is as follows:

- Total of 387 laboratory-confirmed influenza cases for the 2023-2024 season
- 137 cases for the week of January 1st, which is greater than the same week last season
- **Increasing number of active influenza outbreaks, 6 currently in our long-term care and retirement homes**
- Peak of influenza activity is likely in the next 2-4 weeks.
- **The influenza vaccine appears to be a very good match to the circulating influenza A strains**

The SMDHU [COVID-19 Community Risk Level](#) continues to be high and has been since Nov 23rd 2022 and there are currently 17 active COVID-19 institutional outbreaks. Go to our [Weekly Respiratory Virus Update](#) for more detailed information on the epidemiology of respiratory viruses.

The following is an update of the influenza activity in Ontario.

Ontario:

- As of December 30th (Week 52), 13 public health units are reporting sporadic influenza activity, and 18 public health units are reporting localized influenza activity. The overall assessment of influenza activity in Ontario is higher.
- COVID-19 activity remains high but stable, with approximately 4,000 cases reported from December 24, 2023 to December 30, 2023

SMDHU continues to recommend immunization with any of the available age-appropriate influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. Information on COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV vaccines can be found on the [SMDHU website](#).

PHO laboratory testing approach to [multiplex respiratory virus PCR \(MRVP\)](#) testing is as follows:

1. Symptomatic children (less than 18 years) seen in the Emergency Department (ED)
2. All symptomatic hospitalized patients (ward and ICU/CCU)
3. Symptomatic residents in institutional settings (non-outbreak)
4. Specimens from the first four symptomatic individuals (including healthcare workers/staff) in an outbreak that requests respiratory virus testing

View all Public Health Alert bulletins at the Health Professionals Portal

www.smdhu.org/HPPortal



Subscribe to urgent health email communications (E.g., Public Health Alert) by registering at www.smdhu.org/PHAlert

MRVP detects 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.

FLUID, detecting influenza A, influenza B, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) A/B and SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), will be performed on the following eligible persons:

1. Symptomatic residents and health care workers/staff in the institutional settings in an outbreak requesting for COVID-19 and respiratory virus testing beyond the first four that have been tested for SARS-CoV-2 and MRVP

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 and COVID-19

1. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, [Influenza factsheet](#)
2. Public Health Ontario: [Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool](#)
3. Public Health Ontario: [Influenza information](#)
4. Public Health Agency of Canada, [Flu Watch Surveillance](#)
5. Public Health Ontario: [Key features of Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and Other Common Respiratory Viruses](#)
6. Public Health Ontario: [Antiviral Medications for the 2023-24 Seasonal Influenza: Public Health Considerations](#)
7. [Government of Canada Statement on seasonal influenza vaccine for 2023-2024](#)
8. SMDHU Public Health Alerts: [Influenza and COVID-19](#)