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Widespread Influenza Activity 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 Practitioners, Ontario Health, Ontario Health Teams, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Indigenous Healthcare & Community, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Paramedic Services, Corrections

Date: February 10, 2025

Effective February 11, 2025, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) will be declaring widespread influenza activity in Simcoe Muskoka. This widespread activity is likely going to last for one to three weeks. Widespread activity 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”. **Fourteen (14) of 90 healthcare institutions are in a confirmed respiratory outbreak with 71% of the current respiratory outbreaks being due to influenza.** The formal declaration, which includes informing Public Health Ontario of the local situation, serves as a signal to health care partners to enact strategies to control the further spread of influenza.

As of February 1, 2025, there have been 531 lab-confirmed influenza A cases and 8 lab-confirmed influenza B cases in Simcoe Muskoka since September 1, 2024. **The current proportion of local flu tests done that are positive is 21% with the predominant influenza A strain (79%) locally being H1.** Both provincial and national data suggest that the influenza vaccine appears to be a very good match to the circulating influenza A strains. **Given the current epidemiology, we do expect more influenza infections and institutional outbreaks than an average season.**

Consider timely administration of antivirals (e.g. Oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or Zanamivir) 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 fact sheet on [Influenza Antiviral Treatment](#) both for treatment and prevention.

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.

All residents (immunized and unimmunized) living in long-term care homes and retirement homes where there is a confirmed influenza outbreak are also recommended to be on Oseltamivir prophylaxis, as the influenza vaccine has lower effectiveness in older persons.

More details on the control of respiratory outbreaks are available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/files/2024-11/moh-recommendations-for-outbreak-prevention-and-control-in-institutions-and-clc-en-2024-11-01.pdf>

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

Public Health Ontario's Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool can be accessed at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Infectious-Disease/Respiratory-Virus-Tool>



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.