

Influenza Activity Increasing with First Two Lab-Confirmed Influenza A Outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka

Attention: Physicians, Long-Term Care Facilities, Rest & 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, Medavie EMS Ontario – Muskoka, Rama Mnjikaning EMS

Date: December 29, 2016

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit in collaboration with two local retirement homes in Barrie have declared the first two Influenza A outbreaks for the 2016-17 season. **Over the past week, influenza A activity has been increasing locally and across the province which is typical for this time of year. Influenza activity may peak sometime in the next two to five weeks. With the current predominance of the subtype H3N2, we are likely to see more severe illness and outbreaks than last season when the predominant strain was H1N1.** The health unit will continue to monitor surveillance data and provide periodic updates. You can follow local influenza activity at www.smdhu.org/WeeklyFluNews where you can also subscribe to the weekly email summaries and updates.

In Ontario, as of the week ending December 17, 2016:

- 630 cases of laboratory-confirmed influenza have been reported
- **9.1% of all swabs submitted for influenza were positive**
- 95.7% of all influenza cases were influenza A
- of the influenza A cases with subtype information available, 99.3% were H3N2 and 0.7% were (H1N1)pdm09
- ten influenza outbreaks were reported in Week 50

With the influenza season now in full swing, primary care providers may see patients who either live or work in long-term care homes or retirement homes requesting prophylaxis for Tamiflu. **When an influenza outbreak is declared in an institutional setting, antiviral medication is recommended for:**

- **prophylaxis of residents/patients who are not ill with influenza symptoms, regardless of immunization status;**
- **prophylaxis of unvaccinated staff members;**
- **treatment of residents/patients meeting the case definition, regardless of immunization status.**

The main antiviral medication used for prophylaxis is Tamiflu 75mg po daily until the outbreak is declared over. It is recommended to provide at least a 14 day prescription with a repeat if possible. Treatment dose is 75mg po bid x five days. For more detailed information on the use of antivirals for influenza and how to prescribe for renal impaired patients, please go to https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Antiviral_Medication_Influenza_Fact_sheet_2016.pdf

There is still time for your patients to be immunized against influenza this season. This year's trivalent influenza vaccines for the 2016-2017 influenza season (northern hemisphere winter), contain the following strains and appear to be a good match based on what we are seeing to date: an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus, an A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus, and a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

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, Communicable Disease Team at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8809. For outbreaks declared outside of regular business hours, please call the afterhours call centre at 1-888-225-7851.

Additional Information on Influenza

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Influenza information can be accessed at:
<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Immunization/flu.aspx>

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>