

Widespread and Peak Influenza Activity in Simcoe Muskoka

Attention: Physicians, Long-Term Care Facilities, Retirement Homes, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Occupational Health Professionals, Neighbouring Health Units, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, Medavie EMS Ontario – Muskoka, Rama Mnjikaning EMS

Date: January 10, 2018

Effective January 10, 2018, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is declaring widespread influenza activity in Simcoe Muskoka. This widespread activity is likely going to last for two to four 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”. The formal declaration, which includes informing Public Health Ontario of the local situation, serves as a signal to health care partners to enact policies and strategies to control the further spread of influenza.

As of January 10, 2018, there have been 162 lab-confirmed influenza A cases and 42 lab-confirmed influenza B cases in Simcoe Muskoka since September 1, 2017. The current proportion of local flu tests done that are positive is 30%. **The predominant influenza A strain (92%) is H3. The vaccine has historically been less effective against H3 strains vs. other strains, and therefore we expect lower than the average 40-60% effectiveness. Influenza B activity this season is unusually early. The current predominant B strain (90%) is not included in this year’s adult influenza vaccine. It is however included in the quadrivalent influenza vaccine that contains two influenza B strains, and is funded and recommended for those under 18 years of age. 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 detailed fact sheet on the use of antivirals, both for treatment and prevention available at:

http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Antiviral_Medication_Influenza_Fact_Sheet.pdf

The Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada have posted guidelines and an algorithm available at: https://www.ammi.ca/Content/Guidelines/Flu_Algorithm.pdf.

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.

More details on the control of respiratory outbreaks are available at:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/flu/guide.aspx>

Local weekly Simcoe Muskoka surveillance information is available at:

www.smdhu.org/WeeklyFluNews

Public Health Ontario’s Ontario Respiratory Virus Bulletin can be accessed at:

<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/SurveillanceServices/Pages/Ontario-Respiratory-Virus-Bulletin.aspx>

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.