

Influenza Update: Peaking Influenza A (H1N1) Activity

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

Date: January 14, 2019

To date we have had 157 lab confirmed influenza A cases in Simcoe Muskoka. Influenza A activity is currently reaching or at its peak. **H1N1 is the predominant strain (85%)** of the local specimens that have been subtyped. **The H1N1 component of this year's vaccine has typically been very effective.** There have also been four lab confirmed influenza B cases and typically, the B wave will arrive later in the season. **Only one institutional influenza outbreak in Simcoe Muskoka** has been reported to date. The percent positivity for influenza A testing in Simcoe Muskoka is increasing. Locally, for week 1, influenza A percent positivity in Simcoe Muskoka was 22.2%, while provincially it was reported at 18.9%. Influenza B percent positivity remains low both locally (0%) and provincially (0.2%).

This year with the predominant strain being H1N1, it often is associated with a disproportionately higher burden of illness among children and younger adults versus seniors. To date, 39% of reported cases in Simcoe Muskoka have been in children under the age of 14 years and 80% of the total cases have been in individuals under the age of 65 years. As of January 5, 2019 there had been 1,348 influenza-associated hospitalizations across Canada, with the highest rate in children under five. The diagnosis of influenza in the community is mainly a clinical diagnosis now that the Public Health Ontario lab is no longer testing community specimens for influenza. With this in mind, we encourage the use of antivirals if you are suspecting influenza.

While annual vaccination is the best tool for prevention of influenza and its complications, antiviral drugs are also used as prophylaxis for residents in institutions that are experiencing an influenza outbreak. Treatment with antiviral drugs is a potential second line of defense for those in the community as well as those living in institutions who become ill, to reduce morbidity and mortality. Public Health Ontario has a detailed fact sheet on the use of antivirals, both for treatment and prevention:

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

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 information can be accessed at:

<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Immunization/flu.aspx>

2. Public Health Agency of Canada, Issues of FluWatch can be accessed at:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>

3. NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccination for the 2018-19 season can be accessed at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/reports-publications/canada-communicable-disease-report-ccdr/monthly-issue/2018-44/issue-6-june-7-2018/article-1-summary-influenza-2018-2019.html>

4. 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>

