

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza Virus Update of Current Status and Issues

November 1, 2009

Pandemic (H1N1) influenza activity in Middlesex-London:

Influenza activity in Middlesex-London continues to increase and is widespread in the community. Between October 26 and 30, the Health Unit received reports of 73 new laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza, both Pandemic (H1N1) influenza and influenza A, which is quite likely to be the Pandemic (H1N1) strain. The number of people in the community who have influenza is likely considerably higher than indicated by laboratory-confirmed cases, since most people with influenza do not need to see their health care provider, and for most people testing is not recommended.

Since the last Community Update, 25 people with laboratory-confirmed H1N1 infection were admitted to hospital.

Across the province, 31.7% of all nose samples taken in people with respiratory illness came back positive for the Pandemic (H1N1) strain, although testing was pending on several samples. In Middlesex-London, the percentage was considerably higher at 57.9%. Both of these values are higher than in the previous week. The higher rates in Middlesex-London compared to Ontario as a whole are likely due to fact that influenza activity in our area appears to have started earlier than in most other areas of the province.

The proportion of patients visiting emergency rooms due to symptoms of fever and respiratory illness also continues to rise. On average, 36.8% of patients visiting London emergency departments during the week of October 25 and 31 had fever and respiratory symptoms. The increase is particularly evident at the paediatric emergency room, where the weekly average of patients with fever and respiratory symptoms was 63.7%.

This week, the Health Unit began monitoring two additional indicators of influenza-like illness in the community. A large community employer has begun participating as a sentinel site for staff absenteeism. As of October 22, the proportion of staff absent due to illness was relatively low and comparable to the preceding three weeks. An X-ray provider is also participating as a sentinel site for new diagnoses of bronchopneumonia, which is a complication of influenza infection. Although only three days of results were initially available, diagnoses of bronchopneumonia were made in 12.9% to 15.5% of all chest X-rays performed. Usually only 1 to 2% of chest X-rays reveal bronchopneumonia.

Appendix A of this update shows all the indicators that the Health Unit is using to monitor influenza activity in Middlesex County and the City of London.

Influenza vaccination clinics and vaccine distribution:

From October 27 to 31, inclusive, the Health Unit ran a total of 10 immunization clinics and vaccinated approximately 14,000 people who are either health care providers or in high risk groups. **Although lines were very long at the first several clinics, they have decreased considerably since then. There are six remaining clinics targeted for high risk groups.** The dates, times and locations can be found on our website at healthunit.com/h1n1info.

It is very important to note that the remaining six clinics are only for the following high risk groups:

- Individuals under the age of 65 who:
 - have underlying medical conditions (such as heart disease, lung disease, cancer, kidney disease, problems with their immune system, blood problems, nervous system problems, very overweight);
 - are household members of children under the age of six (6) months;
 - are household members of people who have problems with their immune system (such as cancer treatment, HIV/AIDS, transplant patients, kidney dialysis, taking long term steroids or some other drugs);
- Children between six (6) months and less than five (5) years of age;
- Health care workers;
- Pregnant women (see below)*.

***Pregnancy:** We are expecting to receive a supply of the unadjuvanted vaccine this week, so pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy can be vaccinated with this product. Please check our website or contact the Health Unit at 519-663-5317 ext. 2330 to determine which clinics will have the unadjuvanted vaccine available.

Some things to consider for those attending our clinics are as follows:

- Bring your health card or drivers license;
- Wear a short-sleeved shirt;
- Don't skip a meal before attending;
- Consider coming later in the clinic as the clinics tend to be very busy at the beginning;
- Come dressed for the weather in case the line extends outside;
- Bring something for the kids to play with and eat in case there is a line;
- If the line is long, consider having one adult wait in the line; that person can call the kids or more vulnerable person to come when they are approaching the vaccination area.

In addition to our vaccination clinics, the Pandemic (H1N1) influenza vaccine has been distributed to some doctor's offices for their patients who meet the high risk criteria outlined above, hospitals for their staff members and some of their patients, and to long term care facilities for some of their staff members.

We hope to expand our clinics in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Additional information on clinic expansion will be made available shortly.

Keep checking our website:

Information on our website is regularly updated. News on the Pandemic (H1N1) influenza vaccine and clinic schedules will be posted there when they are available. Visit www.healthunit.com/h1n1info regularly.

Appendix A Summary of Influenza Indicators

October 31, 2009

All indicators show that influenza-like illness activity continues to increase and is widespread throughout the community.

Indicator	Recent data / trends	Comments
Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From October 25 to 31, 36.8% of patients presented with a fever and respiratory illness across all emergency rooms and the urgent care centre. Values ranged from 17.1% to 75.0%, depending on the site and day. • The weekly average was highest at the paediatric emergency room, where 63.7% of patients presenting with a fever and respiratory symptoms. • By comparison, over the summer less than 3% of patients presenting to London emergency rooms have had a fever and respiratory symptoms.
Sentinel physicians reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness	Comparable to previous week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the week of October 18 to 24, the overall percentage of patients reporting fever and respiratory illness on the surveillance day(s) was 8.5%. Values ranged from 4.8% to 25.8% depending on the practice and the day. • This information is based on reports from 25 physicians screening at 4 medical practices.
Absence reports from child care centres (i.e. absenteeism > 10%)	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between October 26 and 30, 11.4% (13/114) of child care centres in Middlesex-London reported absenteeism > 10%.
Absence reports from schools (i.e. absenteeism > 10%)	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between October 26 and 29, 68.8% (88/128) of elementary schools in the two English school boards in Middlesex-London had a 4-day absenteeism rate exceeding 10%. • The 4-day average percentage of students absent ranged from 1.1% to 26.1%, depending on the school. • Increased absenteeism has also been reported in secondary schools and private schools.
Staff absenteeism reports from sentinel worksite	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From October 16 to 22, an average of 2.9% of employees were absent from work due to illness. This is comparable to the previous three weeks.

Appendix A
(Continued)

Indicator	Recent data / trends	Comments
Laboratory-confirmed cases	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From October 26 to 30, 73 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A were reported. This includes cases of Pandemic (H1N1) and influenza A positive cases that are likely to be Pandemic (H1N1). As of October 30, in total, there have been 120 laboratory-confirmed cases of Pandemic (H1N1) and 104 influenza A positive cases that are quite likely to be the Pandemic (H1N1) strain reported among Middlesex-London residents, the majority of whom have acquired their infection this fall. <p>Note: numbers may change slightly as additional information becomes available.</p>
Newly identified bronchopneumonia cases at sentinel X-ray provider	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between October 27 and 29, the proportion of chest X-rays diagnosed as bronchopneumonia ranged from 12.9% to 15.5%. The daily average for this diagnosis is typically much lower at between 1% and 2%.
Percentage of all laboratory samples that are positive	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Middlesex-London from October 18 to 24, 57.9% of all samples taken to test for influenza were positive for the Pandemic (H1N1) strain. In Ontario from October 18 to 24, 31.7% of all samples taken to test for influenza were positive for the Pandemic (H1N1) strain. This compares to approximately 1% at the beginning of September.
Antiviral prescriptions filled by major pharmacies	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From October 18 to 24 in Middlesex-London, increased antiviral prescriptions were filled by major pharmacies relative to other prescriptions, compared to the previous week.
Calls to Telehealth Ontario related to respiratory and influenza-like illness	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between October 26 and 30, the Health Unit was notified of an increased number of calls related to respiratory illness.
Long-term care facility outbreaks	None reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No long-term care facility outbreaks due to the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 strain have been reported.
Hospitalizations	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since last report, 25 hospitalizations have been reported among laboratory-confirmed cases. To date, 37 people have been hospitalized who had laboratory confirmation of the Pandemic (H1N1) strain or who had influenza A, which is quite likely to be the Pandemic (H1N1) strain.
Deaths	None reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No deaths have been reported.