

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

October 25, 2009

### **Pandemic (H1N1) influenza activity in Middlesex-London:**

Influenza activity in Middlesex-London continues to increase and is now high and widespread. Between October 19 and 23, the Health Unit received reports of 9 laboratory-confirmed cases of Pandemic (H1N1) influenza and 33 cases of influenza A, which are quite likely to be the Pandemic (H1N1) strain. In total, 78 laboratory-confirmed cases of Influenza A or Pandemic (H1N1) have been reported to the Health Unit this fall. The number of people in the community who have influenza is likely considerably higher than indicated by laboratory-confirmed cases because most people with influenza do not need to see their health care provider, and for most people testing is not recommended.

Across the province, 16% of all nose samples taken in people with respiratory illness came back positive for the Pandemic (H1N1) strain. In Middlesex-London, the percentage was considerably higher at 52.4%.

Another indicator that provides further insight into the level of influenza activity in the community is the proportion of patients visiting emergency rooms or doctors' offices due to symptoms of fever and respiratory illness. These rates have risen dramatically during the past two weeks. On average, 25.4% of patients visiting London emergency departments during the week of October 18 to 22 had fever and respiratory symptoms.

Other indicators also suggest that influenza activity in our community is increasing. Absenteeism in both child care centres and elementary schools are rising. As well, the Health Unit was notified about a greater-than-expected number of calls related to respiratory illness to Telehealth Ontario, a free, confidential telephone service that provides health advice and general health information to callers.

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.

### **The Pandemic (H1N1) influenza vaccine has arrived:**

Approximately 20,000 doses of Pandemic (H1N1) influenza vaccine have arrived in the community. The vaccine is being distributed to the highest risk individuals first. These individuals are: health care providers, children between 6 months of age and less than 5 years of age, household contacts of children less than 6 months of age, and pregnant women who are over 20 weeks in their pregnancy or pregnant women who have medical conditions. More vaccine is expected this week and it will be targeted to those who are less than 65 years of age with underlying medical conditions. Vaccine for the general public and seniors is expected to be available in about two weeks; however, this may change depending on vaccine availability and the number of people coming to receive the vaccine.

Please check our website frequently for dates, times and locations of newly-announced clinics at [www.healthunit.com/h1n1info](http://www.healthunit.com/h1n1info). When attending a clinic, please bring your health card or driver's license. Do not attend a clinic if you have a new onset of fever and respiratory symptoms.

## **Do not seek medical care unless you need it:**

As influenza activity continues to increase in our community, only people who need health care should be going to their doctors or walk-in clinics. These are people outlined in Box C in the attached "Caring for People with Symptoms of Influenza" (October 22, 2009). These people can be placed on an antiviral drug to decrease their chances of developing complications of influenza. Only people with signs of severe or worsening illness, as outlined in Box D on the attached sheet, should go to the emergency department or urgent care.

**It is very important that employers do not request a note from people returning to school, work or child care settings.** This will cause unnecessary demands on the health care system. People with symptoms of influenza can return to school, work or child care when their fever is gone for **24 hours** and they are feeling better and are fully able to go back to normal activities. It is recognized that a cough may persist for several days to weeks. Health care workers should ensure they are better for at least 24 hours and their cough is only mild.

## **Public information sessions – vaccinations are NOT available at these sessions:**

There are two public information sessions remaining:

- October 27<sup>th</sup> 7 to 9 pm North London Optimist Community Centre, 1345 Cheapside Street, London
- October 29<sup>th</sup> 7 to 9 pm Earl Nichols Community Centre, 799 Homeview Road, London

The sessions consist of a presentation with ample time for questions.

## **Regular immunization services curtailed:**

As of Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, most of the regular immunization clinic services at the Middlesex-London Health Unit will be suspended due to the Health Unit's response to the arrival and spread of the Pandemic (H1N1) influenza virus.

As of October 26, 2009, the Health Unit will **only offer immunization clinics for children under the age of two (2) on Wednesdays between 9:00 a.m. and noon at its 50 King Street location. The Pandemic (H1N1) influenza vaccine will not be available at these clinics held at the Health Unit.** The immunization clinics normally held at the Health Unit's Kenwick Mall location in Strathroy on the first Tuesday of each month from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. will be suspended.

## **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](http://www.healthunit.com/h1n1info) regularly.

## Appendix A Summary of Influenza Indicators

October 23, 2009

All indicators are showing an increase in influenza activity, which is now high and widespread throughout the community.

Indicator	Recent data / trends	Comments
<b>Hospital emergency room reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness</b>	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From October 18 to 22, 25.4% of patients were presented with a fever and respiratory illness. Values ranged from 11.7% to 60.9%, depending on the site and day.</li> <li>• By comparison, during the summer less than 3% of patients presented to London emergency rooms had a fever and respiratory symptoms.</li> </ul>
<b>Sentinel physicians reports regarding the percentage of patients with fever and respiratory illness</b>	Comparable to previous week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the week of October 11 to 17, the overall percentage of patients reporting fever and respiratory illness on the surveillance day(s) was 6.4%. Values ranged from 3.0% to 10.0% depending on the practice and the day.</li> <li>• Information is based on reports from 25 physicians screening at 4 medical practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Absence reports from child care centres (i.e. absenteeism &gt; 10%)</b>	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between October 19 and 23, 8.8% (10/114) of child care centres in Middlesex-London reported absenteeism &gt; 10%.</li> </ul>
<b>Absence reports from schools (i.e. absenteeism &gt; 10%)</b>	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between October 19 and 23, 23.5% (31/132) of elementary schools in the two English school boards in Middlesex-London had a weekly absenteeism rate exceeding &gt; 10%.</li> <li>• The weekly average percentage of student absent ranged from 1.2% to 20.1%, depending on the school.</li> <li>• Several reports have been received about individual classes experiencing high absenteeism at some schools.</li> <li>• Five other schools reported absenteeism &gt;10%.</li> <li>• At the secondary school level, increased absenteeism has also been reported.</li> </ul>

**Appendix A**  
(continued)

Indicator	Recent data / trends	Comments
<b>Laboratory-confirmed cases</b>	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From October 19 to 23, 9 laboratory-confirmed cases of Pandemic (H1N1) influenza A were reported, as well as 33 influenza A cases that are likely to be Pandemic (H1N1).</li> <li>As of October 23, in total, there have been 63 laboratory-confirmed cases of Pandemic (H1N1) and 68 influenza A positive cases that are quite likely to be the Pandemic (H1N1) strain reported by Middlesex-London residents, 78 of whom acquired infection this fall.</li> </ul>
<b>Percentage of all laboratory samples that are positive</b>	Increasing and high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Middlesex-London from October 11 to 17, 52.4% of all samples taken to test for influenza were positive for the Pandemic (H1N1) strain.</li> <li>In Ontario from October 11 to 17, approximately 16% 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Antiviral prescriptions filled by major pharmacies</b>	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From October 11 to October 17 in Middlesex-London, increased antiviral prescriptions were filled by major pharmacies relative to other prescriptions, compared to the previous week.</li> </ul>
<b>Calls to Telehealth Ontario related to respiratory and influenza-like illness</b>	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between October 19 and 23, the Health Unit has been notified of an increased number of calls related to respiratory illness.</li> </ul>
<b>Long-term care facility outbreaks</b>	None reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No long-term care facility outbreaks due to the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 strain have been reported.</li> </ul>
<b>Hospitalizations</b>	Increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five new admissions were reported this past week.</li> <li>To date, 12 people who had laboratory confirmation of the Pandemic (H1N1) strain or who had influenza A, which is quite likely to be the Pandemic (H1N1) strain, have been hospitalized.</li> </ul>
<b>Deaths</b>	None reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No deaths have been reported.</li> </ul>