



**Influenza Surveillance Report
March 21, 2012**

Biweekly updates on influenza activity and respiratory illness can be found on our website at <http://www.elginhealth.on.ca/>

Greetings,

This is the ninth report of the 2011-2012 influenza season and we are seeing increases in respiratory illness being reported at Emergency Room visits. School absentee rates are increasing. While no institutional outbreaks of influenza illness have been identified in Elgin-St.Thomas to date we are aware of three ongoing influenza outbreaks in long term care facilities in the Middlesex-London area.

Sentinel Physicians for Influenza Surveillance Programs

Sentinel physicians across Ontario play an important role in surveillance of influenza illness and vaccine efficacy each year. We currently have no physicians in the Elgin-St. Thomas area that are designated sentinel physicians.

To support the FluWatch National Surveillance program, sentinels report weekly on the number of patients presenting at their practice with influenza like illness. To support the Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness Study (VE) the community sentinels swab eligible patients who present to their practice with influenza like illness. This enables Public Health Ontario to monitor circulating respiratory viruses, both influenza and other viruses, and contribute to a multi-provincial study to monitor VE. A link to the VE study can be found at (<http://www.oahpp.ca/resources/studies/vestudy/index.html>.)

If you would like to participate or would like more information on the Sentinel Physician Program please call me at 519-631-3159 ext. 1223 or email me at lmclachlin@elginhealth.on.ca and I can direct you to more information.

Best Regards,

Laura McLachlin
Director of Health Protection

ESTPH Influenza Surveillance Report

March 7 to March 20, 2012

Local Influenza Activity

For the time period of March 7 to March 20, one new confirmed case of influenza A (H3) was reported to Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.

Provincial Influenza Activity

In Ontario, for the week of March 4 to March 10, 433 new influenza cases were reported, which is higher than the number reported in the previous week (306).

A total of 1432 influenza cases have been reported for the 2011-2012 surveillance season. The majority of influenza cases to date were subtyped as influenza B, which accounts for 65.5% (938/1432) of cases this season. Influenza B had the highest percent positivity at 17.1%.¹

National Influenza Activity

Overall influenza activity in Canada continued to increase between March 4 and March 10 compared to previous weeks.

The percent positive for influenza B detections continued to increase and has surpassed the percent positive for influenza A detections; the majority of influenza B detections (89%) this week were from Ontario and Quebec.

Since the start of the season, the National Microbiology Laboratory has antigenically characterized 532 influenza viruses (121 A/H3N2, 99 A/H1N1 and 312 B). Of the 121 A/H3N2 viruses, 113 (93.4%) were antigenically similar to A/Perth/16/2009. Of the 99 A/H1N1 viruses characterized, 98 (99.0%) were antigenically similar to A/California/07/2009. Of the 312 influenza B viruses characterized, 167 (53.5%) were antigenically similar to the vaccine strain B/Brisbane/60/2008 (Victoria lineage). The remaining 145 (46.5%) influenza B viruses are antigenically related to the reference virus B/Wisconsin/01/2010-like, which belongs to the Yamagata lineage.²

Outbreak Status

There were no new respiratory outbreaks declared in Elgin St. Thomas for this reporting period.

Sixteen new institutional respiratory outbreaks were reported between March 4 and March 10, including six influenza B outbreaks. Thirty-nine institutional influenza outbreaks have been reported to date this season.¹

¹ Ontario Influenza Bulletin, <http://www.oahpp.ca/resources/flubulletin.html>

² Public Health Agency of Canada, FluWatch, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>

**Summary of Influenza Activity and Respiratory Illness
in St. Thomas and Elgin County**

Measure	Compared to Previous Week	Explanation
Hospital emergency room visits (with Febrile Respiratory Illness)	Increasing	Between March 4 th and March 10 th , 2012, 25% of people screened for FRI at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital showed signs of illness. Between March 11 th and March 17 th , 28% showed signs of illness. There has been an increase in reported FRI symptoms over the reporting period. This is the highest proportion of positive FRI screenings so far this season.
Absence reports from schools	Increasing	The average student absenteeism for the week of March 5 th to March 9 th ranged from 4.2% up to 16.7%. Overall, student absenteeism was slightly higher than the previous reporting period.
Telehealth Respiratory Syndrome Calls	None reported	Elgin St. Thomas was not included in any ILI clusters reported by Telehealth.
Lab-confirmed cases	Increasing	There was one new laboratory confirmed case of influenza A in Elgin St. Thomas.
Long-Term Care Home Outbreaks	Similar	There were no new respiratory outbreaks declared for this reporting period.
Hospitalizations	Increasing	There was one hospitalization due to influenza in Elgin St. Thomas.
Deaths	None reported	There have been no reported deaths associated with influenza in Elgin St. Thomas.
OVERALL	Increasing	Key Findings: Overall, influenza activity was slightly higher for this reporting period.

Reports are updated biweekly and can be found at <http://www.elginhealth.on.ca/>
Please contact the communicable diseases team at Elgin St. Thomas Public Health if you have any questions.