

pH1N1 Flu Virus

County of Lambton
Community Health Services Department

PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

- Issue #9 -
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CURRENT SITUATION

Flu virus activity in Lambton County

The flu virus continues to circulate in the community as indicated by patients that have failed emergency room screenings due to influenza-like-illness. However, activity has fallen to low levels based on most indicators.

The overall impact on absenteeism rates for schools and day care centres has returned to normal.

- No daycares reported absenteeism >10% since November 19, 2009.
- No elementary schools reported absenteeism >10% since November 10, 2009.
- No secondary schools reported absenteeism >10% since November 20, 2009.

The pandemic H1N1 flu virus continues to be the dominant flu strain circulating in the community. In total, two deaths have been reported with lab-confirmation indicating the pH1N1 virus was present.

There is no evidence of seasonal influenza activity at this time, which does not generally begin until December or later.

Vaccine

The seasonal flu vaccine is now available, in addition to the (H1N1) flu vaccine, to all Ontario residents 6 months of age and older. Both the seasonal and H1N1 flu shots will be offered in various settings such as community clinics, workplace clinics and doctors' offices.

Community clinic schedules are posted online at www.lambtonhealth.on.ca.

Clinics have been held in Lambton County at all schools, several day care centres, and in every municipality through various community clinics. A total of **228 clinic sessions** have been scheduled across Lambton County from Oct. 26 to Dec. 10.

Community clinics will now be reduced to three main locations in Lambton County.

SARNIA

Bayside Centre

10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Dec. 11-12, 14-19
Dec. 21-23, 29-30

PETROLIA

Lambton Meadowview Villa

3 p.m.-7 p.m.
Dec. 14-15, 21-22, 29

FOREST

Kimball Hall

3 p.m.-7 p.m.
Dec. 14, 17, 21, 30

"We have an opportunity before all of us today to prevent a potential third wave of H1N1 flu in Ontario simply by being immunized. Further illness and death we have seen from H1N1 is preventable and we have a perfectly matched vaccine available now."

- Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health

QUICK FACTS

- Flu pandemics historically last 12 to 18 months.
- Ontario's flu season historically runs between October and April with peaks of flu activity around December/January.
- Those at high risk of seasonal flu include the elderly, the very young, and those with pre-existing health conditions that compromise their immune systems.
- People who have symptoms of respiratory illness should contact their health care provider or call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or TTY: 1-866-797-0007.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I still need the H1N1 flu vaccine if I've had flu-like illness?

Yes! Since most people who have had an influenza-like illness (ILI) did not have a nasal swab that would confirm H1N1 influenza - or that they were even sick with the flu - there is no way to be certain it was H1N1. There are a number of respiratory illnesses that can mimic influenza-like illness.

In any case, if you were ill, but do not know if you had H1N1 flu (lab confirmed) it is recommended you get the H1N1 flu vaccine. Vaccines help our bodies build up immunity or resistance to viruses.

If your previous "flu" was lab confirmed as H1N1, you are believed to have immunity and do not need to get the H1N1 flu vaccine.

Any immunity from H1N1 influenza infection or vaccination will not provide protection against seasonal influenza. All people, who want protection from seasonal flu, should still get their seasonal influenza vaccine.

GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS AND TOOLS

As a reminder, the MOHLTC continues to issue revised guidance documents. Please monitor for updates. New or revised guidance documents were issued for:

- Faith-Based Groups - *issued December 1, 2009*
- Planning for Extra-Curricular Activities for School-Aged Children - *issued December 1, 2009*

Previously released guidance documents:

- Ambulatory Care Settings
- Long-Term Care Settings
- Education Settings
- Emergency Departments
- Pharmacies
- Shelters
- Home Care Settings
- First Nation Communities
- Child Care Settings

Download the PDF files: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/pro/>

SYMPTOMS OF FLU

Influenza is a very contagious infection of the lungs and airways caused by a virus that can be transmitted from person-to-person, mainly from coughing and sneezing. The H1N1 flu virus is a new version of flu virus, so most people will have little or no immunity, and will cause more cases of illness.

The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus are similar to seasonal influenza:

- Sudden fever (38°C [100.4°F] or higher)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Possible nausea, diarrhea, vomiting

If you do not start to feel better after a few days, or if your symptoms (see below) get worse, you should either call your health care provider or Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000.

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Bluish/grey skin colour
- Bloody or coloured mucus/spit
- Dizziness, confusion
- Severe, persistent vomiting
- High fever lasting more than three days

In Children

- Not eating or drinking fluids
- Not waking up or interacting
- Irritable

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS SICK

Most people who get sick with the H1N1 flu virus can be cared for at home. If you are sick, you should start to feel better within a few days. However, if you develop symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain, high fever lasting more than three days, persistent vomiting, low blood pressure, or in the case of children bluish lips, not drinking or eating, or difficult to wake, seek immediate medical care.

Whether you get the flu, or are caring for someone who is sick, there are some things you can do to make yourself feel better and avoid spreading the virus to others.

- If you have a chronic medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, you should not care for those who are sick.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, often and thoroughly, or use an alcohol-based hand rub with minimum 60%-70% alcohol content.
- If you are sick, stay home, unless you require medical care. Don't go to work, school, shopping or other activities until symptoms pass. If symptoms worsen, seek medical attention.
- When family members are ill, and you are providing care, it may be impossible to keep your distance. Limit or avoid contact until symptoms pass.
- When holding an infant or small child who is ill, place their chin on your shoulder so they are coughing away from your face.
- Take basic pain or fever medication to ease fever and cough.
- **DO NOT** give children or teens under 16, ASA or Aspirin® to treat fever.
- Avoid contact with others until you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medicines.
- Watch for signs of complications and track the person's temperature.
- If the sick person is able, have them wear a mask to control the spread of the virus.
- Wearing a mask may not prevent you from the getting the flu, but it may reduce the risk of getting sick. Wash hands before and after putting on and taking off the mask.
- Sick persons require plenty of rest, and lots of clear fluids.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine.
- Throw used tissues in the garbage and then wash your hands
- Keep sick person's things separate from other belongings in the house. Wash hands after touching these items.
- Eat well-balanced meals and stay active to keep your immune system strong.
- When symptoms pass, the sick person can resume activities.

Prevent the spread of the virus



Wash hands thoroughly and often



Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer handy



Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve



Keep surfaces and items disinfected



Get both seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines

Everyone has an active role in preventing the spread of the H1N1 flu virus. People can become infected by simply touching objects or surfaces with flu viruses on them and then touching their mouth or nose.

LEARN MORE

Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care: www.health.gov.on.ca

Community Health Services Department: www.lambtonhealth.on.ca

CONTACTS

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- or -

ServiceOntario INFOline:
1-800-476-9708

Information provided by:



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