

2011-2012 Influenza Season – confirmed cases in Toronto

Since October 31, Toronto Public Health (TPH) has received reports of three laboratory confirmed cases of influenza: one travel-related influenza A(H3) case, one influenza B case which was likely locally acquired, and one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 (note the new standardized World Health Organization nomenclature for the pandemic influenza A(H1N1) 2009 virus) which was locally acquired.

TPH recommends the following:

- Get your influenza immunization if you have not already done so. Unimmunized health care workers are the main source of nosocomial influenza
- Continue to offer influenza vaccine to your patients. The TPH Flu Shot clinic schedule is available at http://www.toronto.ca/health/flu/pdf/flu_schedule_2011.pdf
- Obtain laboratory testing (nasopharyngeal swab collected in a respiratory virus collection kit) in all persons with suspected influenza who require hospital admission. In ambulatory settings, influenza testing is less critical but may be done in persons who are at high risk of complications. Therapy should not be delayed while awaiting test results
- When caring for people with influenza, follow Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee recommendations, including:
 - droplet and contact precautions,
 - facial protection (which may include a mask in conjunction with eye protection, or a face shield that covers eyes, nose, and mouth) within two metres of a patient on droplet precautions,
 - isolation in a single room or cohorted with another lab-confirmed case, and
 - continued precautions for five days after onset of illness. For more information see “Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings” available at <http://www.oahpp.ca/resources/pidac-knowledge/>
- Advise patients with influenza-like illness to stay home from work or school while ill, and to practise frequent hand hygiene and cough etiquette.

Important information regarding this year’s influenza season:

- Although this year’s seasonal influenza vaccine contains the same three strains as the 2010-2011 vaccine, re-immunization is necessary due to waning immunity
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has released the 2011-2012 Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/11vol37/acs-dcc-5/index-eng.php>). Two important changes, supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, include:
 - children 6-35 months of age can be given a full dose (0.5 mL) of trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV), and
 - there is growing evidence to demonstrate that most egg-allergic individuals can safely receive TIVs as long as proper risk assessment is completed. Refer to the NACI statement.

Any suspect or confirmed cases of influenza should be reported to TPH by calling our surveillance unit at 416-392-7411 during work hours (8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday). Health care facilities should continue reporting all respiratory outbreaks to TPH (afterhours 3-1-1).