HALTON REGION HEALTH DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
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TO: Halton Physicians
   Medical Chiefs of Staff: Joseph Brant Hospital, Halton Healthcare (Oakville, Milton and Georgetown Hospitals)
   Chairs of: Family Practice, Paediatrics, Internal Medicine, Emergency, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Surgery
   Chief of Laboratory Services and Infection Control Practitioners
   Halton Midwives

POST IN: Emergency Department and Physicians Lounge

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: December 17, 2019

RE: Localized Influenza-like illness activity increasing

QUICK FACTS

- Influenza-like-illness (ILI) activity is increasing in Halton. While ILI activity is low in much of Ontario, Halton is seeing increased Emergency Department (ED) visits for ILI and respiratory illness.
- As of December 14, 2019 there have been 27 confirmed cases of influenza this season, 14 of which were last week (week 50, Dec 8-14).
- The first influenza outbreak in a long-term care facility was declared December 16, 2019.
- Most confirmed cases of influenza and respiratory/ILI ED visits are among children, especially those under 5 years.
- Current national surveillance suggests there is a good match between the H1N1 and Influenza B components of this year’s vaccine and circulating virus. However, the majority of H3N2 samples belong to a different genetic group than the vaccine component. It is too early in the season to estimate vaccine efficacy.

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Public Health Ontario provides Guidelines for the use of antivirals for suspected and confirmed influenza and the management of outbreaks.
- Continue to encourage everyone to receive influenza vaccination, especially those at high-risk for complications. For persons over 65 years old, offer either high-dose trivalent or standard-dose quadrivalent vaccine based on availability. The Health Department’s stock of high-dose trivalent vaccine has been fully distributed. Additional doses are not expected.

KEY MESSAGES FOR PATIENTS

- It is more important to get vaccinated prior to influenza infection with an available vaccine than to wait for a specific vaccine (e.g. high dose).

RESOURCES

- Sign up online for Halton’s Weekly Influenza Activity Report. See Ontario’s Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin and Canada’s FluWatch for provincial and national influenza surveillance.

Please report all suspected or confirmed cases of Diseases of Public Health Significance (formerly Reportable Diseases) to the Halton Region Health Department as soon as possible. Diseases marked * should be reported immediately by telephone (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or fax (Mon-Fri, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm only). Other diseases can be reported the next working day. Call 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866. For general information, please visit halton.ca.

If you can’t access hyperlinks, please sign-up for electronic updates by emailing doctors@halton.ca