



**Office of the Medical Health Officers**

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**December 20, 2016**

Dear Physicians & Nurse Practitioners:

**Re: Influenza Season Update cases expected to peak during holiday season**

Influenza cases are increasing in the Saskatoon Health Region. As of December 19, 2016, there have been 87 lab-confirmed cases of influenza A in Saskatoon Health Region. Almost half of those cases were reported over the last week, indicating that we are very rapidly moving in to a period of intense influenza circulation in our community (the predicted peak of flu activity will be in about two weeks).

Since December 10, 2016, there have been a total of 4 long-term care institutional outbreaks in SHR, consisting of: 2 Influenza A, and 1 respiratory outbreak (lab-confirmed as parainfluenza), and 1 new respiratory outbreak under investigation; in addition we have had nine influenza hospitalizations thus far.

**Action:**

- As we are entering an intensive period of flu activity in the area, please prepare your clinics to receive a higher case load of individuals with respiratory symptoms, especially during the holiday season.
- Encourage your patients to continue to practice frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette at this time.
- Please continue to offer the flu shot to patients. Patients can visit [www.4flu.ca](http://www.4flu.ca) to find out where influenza vaccine is available including at pharmacies for those 9 years and older. Influenza A(H3N2) continues to be the most common subtype detected this year, and so far results show a good match between circulating strains and this year's flu vaccine.

**What do I need to know?**

**Influenza Like Illness (ILI):** Is characterized by fever and cough and one additional symptom which may include myalgia, runny nose, sore throat or headache

**Testing:** Nasal Pharyngeal swab in universal transport medium (UTM)

**Treatment/Prophylaxis:** oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®)

- Saskatchewan residents are eligible for coverage with an active Health Services Number (HSN) who have been prescribed either anti-viral medication for treatment of influenza following the Association of Medical Microbiologists and Infectious Disease Canada (AMMI) Guidelines at <https://www.ammi.ca/?ID=122&Language=ENG>

For weekly information on influenza activity in province, visit the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health website at <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/health/other-reports/influenza-reports>

Sincerely,

*Original signed*

Dr. Johnmark Opondo  
M.B., ChB., M.PH.  
Deputy Medical Health Officer

*Healthiest people ~ Healthiest communities ~ Exceptional service*