

February 19, 2025

Public Health Alert – Increase in Gastrointestinal and Respiratory Illness

Situation

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) monitors community indicators including institutional outbreak activity, hospitalizations, deaths, and community-reported transmission of gastrointestinal and respiratory illness. Over the past month, NWHU has noted the following:

- Increasing Influenza A case rates
- Increasing percent positivity for Influenza
- Increasing hospitalizations for Influenza
- Increasing respiratory and gastrointestinal outbreaks in congregate care settings
- Increased reports of gastrointestinal and respiratory illness from schools and daycares

This indicates that we are in a high-risk period for respiratory illness transmission. It should be noted that statistics can vary significantly week to week for smaller population numbers like ours.

Actions requested

- Continue to offer patients/residents and Health Care Workers (HCW) influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.
- Continue to promote staff [self-assessment](#) and following the control measures indicated by the assessment.
- Be aware of new or worsening respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms in your patients or residents.
- Report to your local NWHU any suspect or confirmed respiratory or gastrointestinal outbreaks in your facility.
- Consider targeted continuous masking for high-risk periods as outlined in Table 2 and 3 of the Public Health Ontario Best Practice Document for [Transmission of Acute Respiratory Infection in All Health Care Settings](#).
- Consider targeted physical distancing of at least one metre in high-risk environments (such as waiting rooms).



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

www.nwhu.on.ca

Resources

Local respiratory disease surveillance data is available on the NWHU website: Reports for Partners - Northwestern Health Unit (nwhu.on.ca) and Public Health Ontario's online Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool where you can access comprehensive respiratory virus information in Ontario.

Contact

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