

**Date:** 16 September 2016

**To:** South Zone Physicians

**From:** Medical Officers of Health - South Zone

**RE:** INFLUENZA AND RESPIRATORY VIRUSES CIRCULATING

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### **INFLUENZA**

This week there have been 2 confirmed Influenza cases (one Influenza A and one B) in the Lethbridge area, as well as a confirmed Influenza A outbreak at a large Supportive Living Facility in Lethbridge.

In past number of years, there have been seasons with early sporadic influenza cases reported, with varying peak influenza activity periods sometime between December to February. Although the current confirmed cases are not an indication that the influenza season has commenced, it is a subtle reminder of the importance of **influenza preparedness**:

- Alberta's influenza immunization program begins October 24, offering influenza vaccine free of charge to all Albertans 6 months of age and older;
- Influenza vaccine will be offered to targeted high risk groups 2 weeks prior (eg. Supportive living facilities, long term care and shelters);
- Recommendations for physicians and clinic staff:
  - Get your flu shot.
  - Follow appropriate infection control guidelines including hand washing.
  - If you have patients residing in supportive living facilities, please ensure to complete the standing order forms for influenza vaccine and post exposure prophylaxis in case of outbreak.
  - Antiviral Recommendations for physicians:
    - Please refer to the updated **AMMI guidelines** (Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada) at <https://www.ammi.ca/?ID=5/>.
- Recommendations for your patients:
  - Immunization – prevention prior to sustained influenza transmission and outbreaks.
  - Frequent hand washing.
  - Stay home when experiencing symptoms of influenza like illness.

### **OTHER RESPIRATORY VIRUSES OF NOTE**

Alberta surveillance is reporting a predominance of rhino/enterovirus over the past weeks. A small number of children with paralysis linked to EV-D68 have been recently reported in Alberta and British Columbia.

EV-D68 causes a spectrum of illnesses. Although most typically causing mild self-limiting respiratory illness, it may cause more severe symptoms, particularly in children aged <5 and those with a history of asthma. A smaller number of EV-D68 infected individuals may develop acute flaccid paralysis (AFP).

### **ACTIONS**

1. **AFP** is a notifiable disease (refer to guideline found at link below). Please report cases to the local Medical Officer of Health (MOH) at 403-388-6111.
2. **Severe Respiratory Illness** (eg ARDS) is a notifiable disease (refer to guideline found at link below). Please report cases to the MOH.
3. Please also report unusual presentations or clusters of severe respiratory disease.
4. For laboratory testing of severe respiratory illness suspected to be due to enteroviruses, please contact the virologist on call as per the memo below (resource 3). Testing patients with mild illness or outside of late summer/early fall season is of limited clinical utility.
5. Infection prevention and control - routine, droplet and contact precautions are recommended for seasonal respiratory viruses.

### **RESOURCES**

1. Alberta Health. Public Health Notifiable Disease Guidelines. Acute Flaccid Paralysis. [www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Guidelines-Acute-Flaccid-Paralysis-AFP-2011.pdf](http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Guidelines-Acute-Flaccid-Paralysis-AFP-2011.pdf)
2. Alberta Health. Public Health Notifiable Disease Guidelines. Severe Respiratory Illness. <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Guidelines-Severe-Respiratory-Illness-2011.pdf>
3. Alberta Provincial Lab Bulletins. Update EV testing. [http://www.provlab.ab.ca/LabBulletin2015/wf\\_lab\\_bulletin\\_provlab\\_update\\_enterovirus\\_testing\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.provlab.ab.ca/LabBulletin2015/wf_lab_bulletin_provlab_update_enterovirus_testing_strategy.pdf)