

Section 1: Summary

The number of lab-confirmed cases has surpassed the seasonal threshold for third week in a row, indicating that the influenza season has officially started. Influenza activity was unusually high over the summer, with two influenza A(H3N2) outbreaks declared in July. There have been two additional influenza A(H3N2) outbreaks reported to date.

Section 2: Outbreaks

An influenza outbreak in an acute care facility was reported in week 40. There have been two outbreaks reported to date.

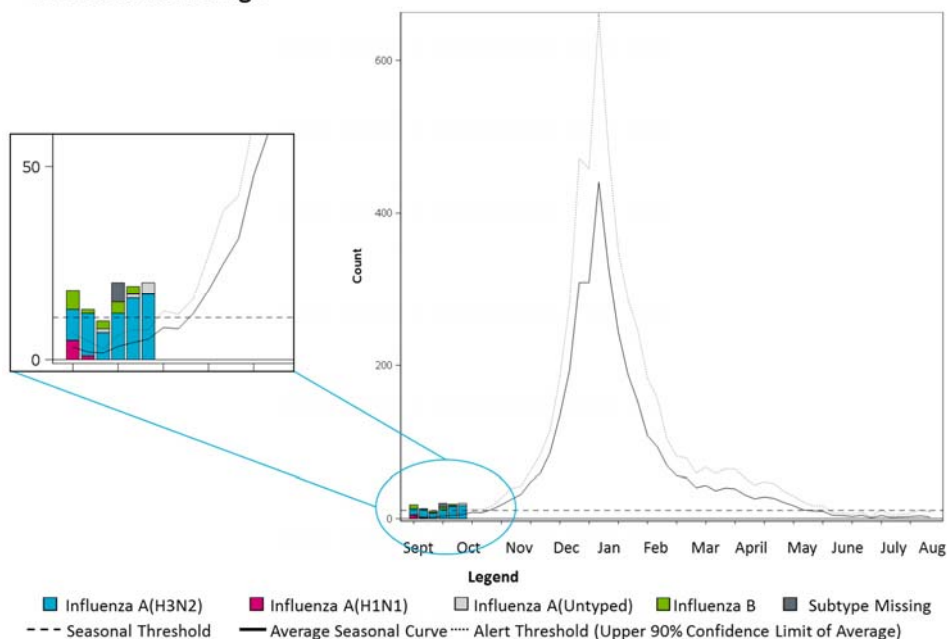
	Outbreaks	
	Current Week	YTD
North	0	0
Edmonton	0	0
Central	0	0
Calgary	0	1
South	1	1
Unknown	0	0
Alberta	1	2

Section 3: Laboratory-Confirmed Influenza Surveillance & Peak Prediction

To date in the 2017/18 season, the Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (Provlab) has reported 100 lab-confirmed influenza cases: 82 influenza A, 13 influenza B and five where subtype is unavailable. The predominant subtype is influenza A(H3N2) with 71 per cent of all isolates. While half of the lab-confirmed cases have been in Calgary Zone, cases have been reported in all zones except Central Zone.

Influenza A activity has surpassed the seasonal threshold for the past three weeks in a row, therefore the influenza season has officially begun. Peak prediction will commence once there is enough laboratory data to support it. The median peak for an Influenza A(H3N2)-predominant season is week 52. Please see data notes for additional details on the seasonal threshold and peak prediction.

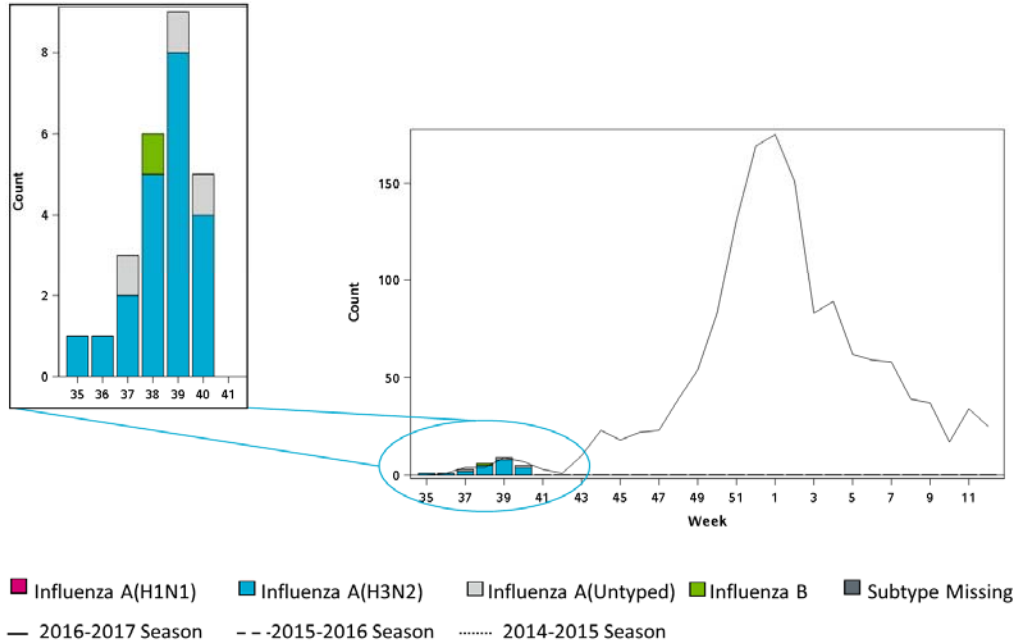
2017/18 Lab-Confirmed Influenza Cases by Serotype and Week, Compared to Seasonal Average



Section 4: Hospitalizations

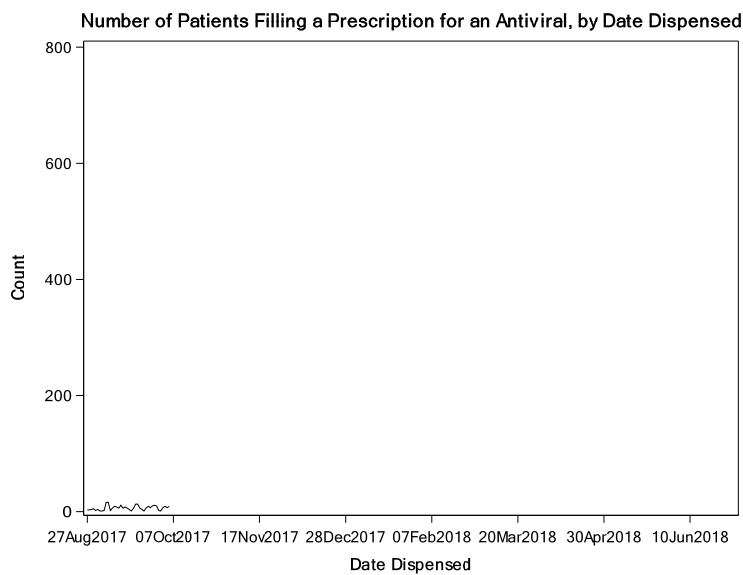
There have been 25 hospitalized influenza cases to date. The rate of hospitalizations and ICU admissions is highest in seniors and the elderly.

Hospitalized Influenza Cases in 2017/18, by Serotype and Week



Section 5: Antiviral Prescriptions

The number of antivirals dispensed by community pharmacists provides an indication of the amount of influenza circulating in the community. There were 32 prescriptions dispensed in week 40. There have been 254 prescriptions dispensed to date.



Section 6: Antiviral Resistance

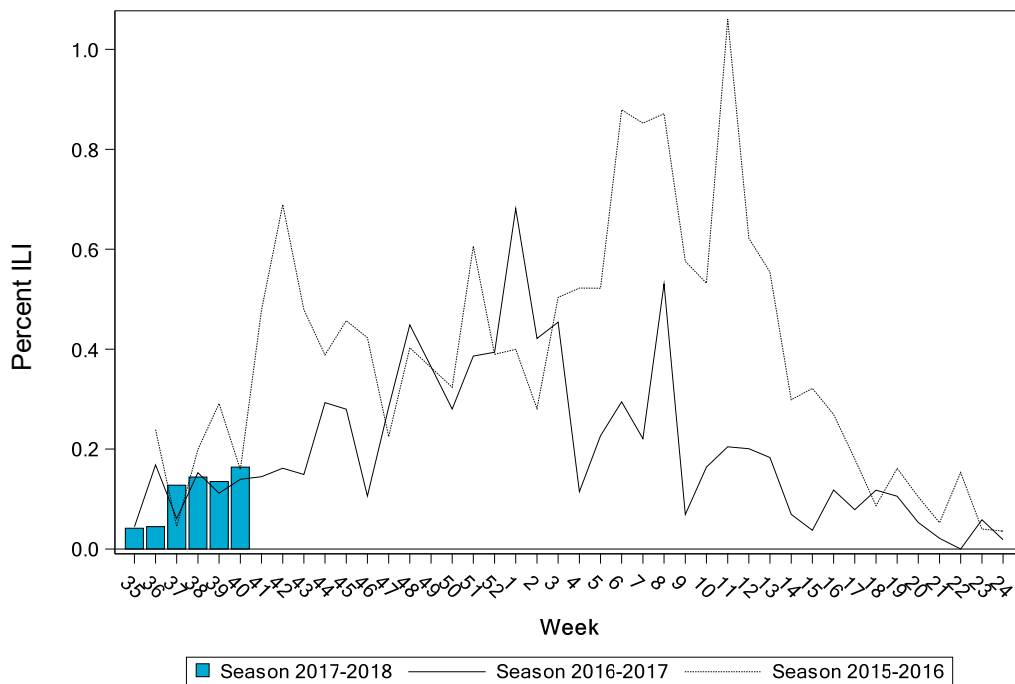
As of Sept. 1, 2017, 21 influenza isolates had been characterized by the National Medical Laboratory (NML). All isolates were sensitive to zanamivir and oseltamivir..

Section 7: Influenza-Like Illness – TARRANT

Sentinel physicians report cases of ILI seen in their practices. Sentinel physicians saw seven cases of influenza-like illness in week 18 (less than 0.1% of all patients seen). There were five cases of ILI (0.1%) seen by physicians in week 17.

	Sentinel Doctors (#)	Sentinel Recorders This Week (#)	Patients Seen (#)	ILI Cases (#)	Patients with ILI (%)
Calgary Zone	60	24	1966	6	0.3
Central Zone	13	8	378	0	0.0
Edmonton Zone	10	7	979	0	0.0
Northern Zone	6	3	121	1	0.8
South Zone	13	10	1436	1	0.1
Alberta	102	52	4878	8	0.2

Percent of Patient Visits Due to Influenza-Like Illness at Sentinel Physicians, by Week and Season



For more information, please go to: www.tarrantviralwatch.ca

Section 8: Acknowledgments

Alberta Health would like to thank Alberta Health Services (AHS), First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), the Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab), the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML), and TARRANT sentinel physician system for their partnership in influenza surveillance in Alberta.

Section 9: Canadian and International Influenza Activity

The following links provide access to other websites related to influenza and ILI.

- Alberta Health (Influenza Reports) <http://www.health.alberta.ca/professionals/influenza-evidence.html>
- Alberta Health (Influenza Forms) <http://www.health.alberta.ca/professionals/notifiable-diseases-guide.html>
- Alberta Health Services <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/2891.asp>
- Canada – FluWATCH www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php
- World Health Organization www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/
- USA – CDC www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/

Section 10: Data Notes

This report utilized data from the Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab), Alberta's influenza like illness (ILI) sentinel physician system (TARRANT), Supplemental Enhanced Service Event (SESE) physician claims data, the Pharmacy Information Network (PIN), as well as outbreak reports and hospitalized case report forms from Alberta Health's Communicable Disease Reporting System (CDRS).

Defining Baselines and Thresholds for Lab-Confirmed Influenza Surveillance

An important function of influenza surveillance is to determine whether the timing or magnitude of the influenza season is unusual compared to previous seasons. The World Health Organization recommends comparing current-season influenza activity to the average epidemic curve, and to create two thresholds – one to determine when the influenza season has begun (seasonal threshold) and to determine at what point current influenza activity would be unusually high (alert threshold)¹.

The average epidemic curve for lab-confirmed influenza surveillance was estimated using data collected between the 2010/11 and 2014/15 seasons. Lab-confirmed influenza became routinely reported in 2009; however, the 2009/10 pandemic season was excluded. The peaks of each season were aligned, and the average number of cases reported per aligned week was calculated as well as the 90 per cent confidence limit. The 90 per cent confidence limit acts as the Alert Threshold. If the number of cases reported in a week passes this threshold it is considered to be unusually high. Until the current season has peaked, the best estimate of the peak is utilized to align the current season to the average epidemic curve. The first estimate utilized was the median of the previous five seasons, week².

The seasonal threshold was estimated as the average number of cases reported per week, in weeks considered outside of the influenza season (i.e., pre-season weeks). The start of the influenza epidemic was defined as the week in which the percent positivity of influenza A laboratory tests at ProvLab were ≥ 10 per cent of all respiratory laboratory tests ordered that week². The end of the influenza epidemic was defined as the week in which the per cent positivity of influenza B was < 10 per cent of all respiratory laboratory tests ordered that week². All weeks in between these time periods were considered part of the influenza epidemic. Per cent positivity is an accepted method of determining the influenza season¹, however visual inspection was also utilized to ensure face validity.

Predicting the Peak of the Epidemic Curve

The peak of the influenza curve was predicted using a deterministic mathematical model that considered transmission across by three age groups (0–18 years, 19–64 years, and ≥ 65 years old). The data used to estimate the parameters in the model is obtained from PSI, CDRS, physician claims data, PIN, and the population registry. The model is simulated weekly using up-to-date laboratory confirmed data to predict the peak for influenza. As more laboratory confirmed counts become available the point estimate for the peak may vary and the width of the confidence interval will decrease.

Note that the current model assumes that influenza activity is similar across zones, which is not the case this season and is the reason why the confidence intervals around the mean are wide.

¹ World Health Organization 2013 "Global Epidemiological Surveillance Standards for Influenza". Geneva. http://www.who.int/influenza/resources/documents/influenza_surveillance_manual/en/

² Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab) Weekly Respiratory Summary