

Respiratory outbreaks result in some restrictions

By Marni Walsh

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) spokesperson Rita Sethi, Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Community Health and Wellness reported "an increase in the number of facilities reporting an influenza outbreak," in response to inquiries from the Shelburne Free Press.

However, although retirement facilities, Dufferin Oaks in Shelburne and The Lord Dufferin Centre in Orangeville have respiratory outbreaks, she noted that influenza has not been confirmed.

As in any respiratory outbreak, such as currently effecting Dufferin Oaks residents, Ms. Sethi relayed that Public Health control measures are put in place; facilities are not quarantined, however there are restrictions on resident activities, new admissions and transfers.

Dave Holwell, Managing Director of the Lord Dufferin Centre in Orangeville, reported that although, like Dufferin Oaks, his retirement residence does not currently have an influenza situation, they "have some residents who have experienced some cold-like symptoms."

"Residents with symptoms are isolated in accordance with guidelines from the Ministry of Health," said Mr. Holwell. "The isolation is up to five days or until all symptoms are resolved, whichever is sooner. This helps to reduce the risk of spreading it to others."

According to Public Health, "influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a viral infection of the respiratory tract that spreads easily from person to person. Onset of symptoms is typically sudden and includes fever, chills, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, and muscle pain."

WDGPH reports, "They are "just starting to see an increased number of lab-confirmed flu cases in the community."

The spokesperson advises that it is not too late to get a flu shot to prevent getting the flu, informing the Shelburne Free Press that this year's vaccine is a good match to what is circulating right now.

As the flu season progresses, it is not uncommon to see a second wave of influenza, with a second strain which may or may not be in the vaccine.

"Based on surveillance data, we anticipate a peak in influenza cases in the next couple of weeks," reports the Public Health Office.

Those most at risk for developing health complications include "children less than five years of age, adults more than 65 years of age, and individuals with chronic diseases, such as diabetes and cancer."

Public Health promotes "regular hand washing" and "the influenza vaccine" as "the best way to protect oneself and others from the flu."

The number of influenza cases in Ontario rose significantly over the holiday season starting with a significant jump during the week of December 11.

Public Health in Middlesex-London is the first public health area to report widespread cases of influenza.