



Respiratory Epidemiological Summary

December 14, 2023

Summary (Epidemiological week 49, 03 Dec to 09 Dec)

Influenza A and RSV activity continues to increase; COVID-19 activity has decreased since early October

- Influenza A activity, including test positivity and virus levels in wastewater, continues to increase across the province. Among subtyped influenza A samples this season, the majority were H1 (81%). Influenza facility outbreaks have increased in the last two weeks.
- RSV test positivity continues to increase across the province and remains high among children. RSV levels remain elevated at wastewater plants in FH and Lulu Island.
- COVID-19 test positivity, cases, hospitalizations, and deaths have decreased since early October.
- The proportion of emergency department and primary care visits for respiratory symptoms have increased since September across the province, particularly among children.

Special report now available

- [Understanding BCCDC's Data Tool for respiratory viruses](#) – This report summarizes how respiratory virus information is collected, analyzed, and shared by the BCCDC to help inform public health action.

National and international context

COVID-19:

- In Canada, COVID-19 activity levels vary across provinces with higher activity in Ontario, Québec, and Prince Edward Island. Overall, the national percent positivity of SARS-CoV-2 has slightly increased in recent weeks.
- In the USA, COVID-19 activity for test positivity, emergency department visits, hospitalizations and deaths have slightly increased in recent weeks.

Influenza:

- In Canada, influenza activity continues to increase but is within expected levels for this time of year. Influenza A has been the most frequently reported influenza type since the start of the 2023/24 respiratory season; among those subtyped, 88% were H1.
- In the USA, seasonal influenza activity continues to increase in most parts of the country. Since the start of October, influenza A was the most frequently reported type (80%); of those subtyped, 86% were H1.

RSV and other viruses:

- In Canada, RSV activity continues to increase and is within expected levels for this time of the year. The activity of all other non-SARS-CoV-2 and non-influenza respiratory viruses is low and near expected levels for this time of year.

Health system impacts

- Alberta and Québec are experiencing a strain on their health care systems as the burden of viral respiratory illnesses has increased, impacting hospital capacity.
- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a Health Alert Network Health Advisory on December 14, 2023, regarding the urgent need to increase immunization coverage for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV. Low vaccination rates coupled with continued increases in respiratory disease activity nationally and internationally have the potential to lead to more severe disease and strain on healthcare systems in the coming weeks. The CDC recommends administration of influenza, COVID-19, and RSV vaccination now, if recommended, and the use of preventative measures and antiviral medications for eligible patients infected with influenza and COVID-19. [CDC Health Advisory](#).