

# REPORTED FLU CASES UP THIS SEASON IN HALTON

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It appears more Halton residents have been afflicted by the common flu this season than last.

According to statistics gathered by the Halton Region Health Department, as of Feb. 29 there have been 559 confirmed cases of influenza, with the illness being distributed fairly equally among children, adults and seniors. By this time last year, there were only 393 cases reported in the region. It's unknown if anyone died from the flu locally as public health units in Ontario no longer collect data about influenza-related deaths.

Health department officials say differences between flu seasons occur for a variety of reasons, including:

- The type of influenza



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Halton health officials recommend staying home when suffering from influenza-type symptoms.

strains that are circulating

- How well matched the flu vaccine is to the circulating strains

- Which age groups are most affected

- The severity of illness resulting from infection.

In addition, public health staff noted many cases of influenza go unreported as lab confirmation isn't necessary or recommended in uncom-

plicated cases, and changes to testing limitations over time can affect the total number of confirmed cases.

"For these reasons, it's not recommended to compare the current flu season to previous flu seasons," Halton health officials said in a prepared response to Metroland Media.

With influenza activity peaking in late December

and early January, and coronavirus media coverage not ramping up until after that, Medical Officer of Health Dr. Hamidah Meghani said it's not possible to determine if COVID-19 prevention measures have had an impact on this year's flu season.

However, the same methods that help prevent respiratory illnesses circulating at this time of year, such as the flu and common colds, also help prevent COVID-19," she said.

The health department recommends local residents protect themselves by washing their hands often with soap and water, or alcohol-based sanitizer if soap isn't available, avoiding facial contact, staying home when feeling ill and getting a flu shot on time in the fall.

Those looking for further details can sign up for weekly influenza updates at halton.ca.



By Cory Soal  
R.H.A.D.

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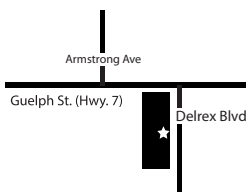


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