

# Communicable Disease - Influenza

## Why Is This Important?

Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by strains of influenza A and B viruses. The strain of the virus may change annually. Globally influenza infects an estimated 5 to 10% of adults and 20 to 30% of children.<sup>1</sup> Rates are highest in children ages 5 to 9, but rates of serious illness and death are highest in children under 2 years, older individuals (65 years and above) and persons with underlying medical conditions.

Influenza infection can lead to medical complications, including pneumonia, and can further impair underlying medical conditions. It is estimated that, in a given year, an average of 12,200 hospitalizations are related to influenza and approximately 3500 deaths are attributable to influenza. Influenza is ranked among the top 10 leading causes of death in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Crowded environments help spread influenza when the virus is circulating. Hand hygiene and cough etiquette help to prevent the spread. Annual [influenza vaccination](#) is the most effective way to prevent influenza and its complications. For other factors affecting reported rates see [About the Data](#).

## What Is Being Done?

[Immunization activities](#)

## To Learn More:

[Influenza program](#)

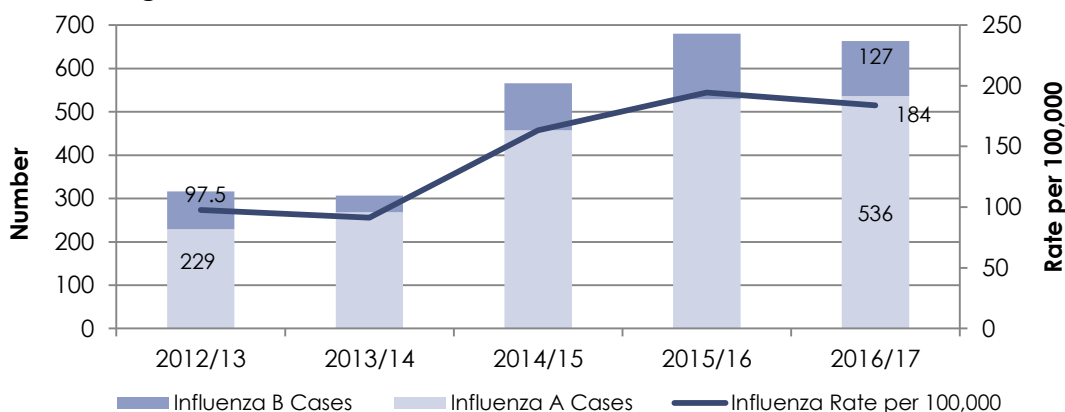
[National Advisory Committee on Immunization Statement on Influenza 2017/18](#)

## Highlights

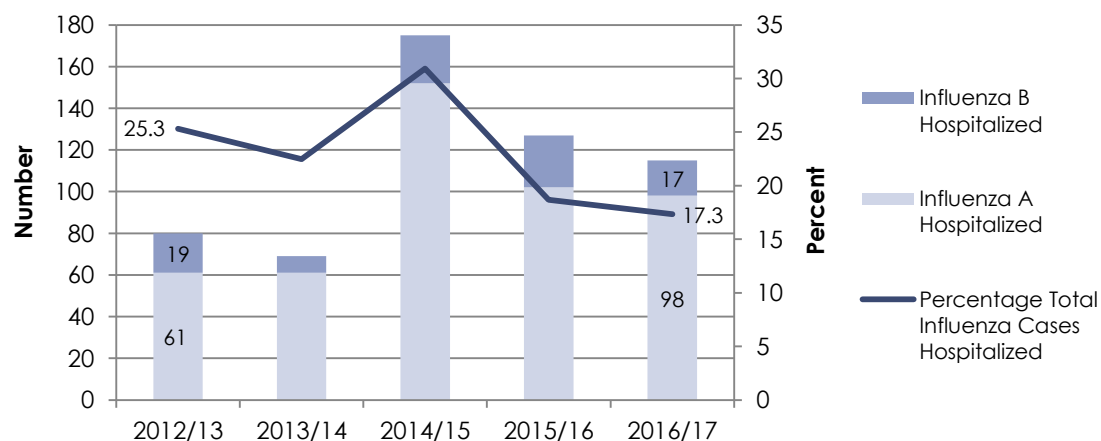
### One in six people with laboratory-confirmed influenza was hospitalized.

- For the past five years the number of influenza cases has increased; influenza A is the leading strain. The rate in 2016/17 was 184 per 100,000 population (*Figure 1*).
- In 2016/17, a total of 663 cases of influenza were reported including 536 cases of influenza A and 127 cases of influenza B (*Figure 1*). H1N1 was the leading strain. All strains identified in the Region were protected against in the 2016/17 vaccine.
- Overall, 17.3% of influenza clients were hospitalized, including 98 individuals with influenza A and 17 with influenza B cases (*Figure 2*).
- Rates were highest in the youngest and oldest age categories. See [Influenza rates and hospitalization](#).
- In 2016/17, H3N2 was the predominant strain.
- Of those hospitalized in 2016/17, seven individuals required intensive care involving intubation and ventilation; these patients all had underlying medical conditions (not shown).
- Influenza immunization coverage is suboptimal in adults 65 years and older; 43% of seniors were not immunized in 2016/17 ([Influenza Immunization by Risk Group](#)).

**Figure 1: Influenza Cases and Rates per 100,000 Population, Saskatoon Health Region, 2012/13 to 2016/17**



**Figure 2: Influenza Cases Hospitalized, Saskatoon Health Region, 2012/13 to 2016/17**



Influenza season is from September 1 to August 31

Source: iPHIS