

Severe Respiratory Illness in Mexico

On April 21st the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care advised all Ontario Public Health Units of a number of severe respiratory illness (SRI) cases occurring in various locations in south and central Mexico and asked us to share the following information with you.

Preliminary Information:

The cases in Mexico presented with influenza-like symptoms that rapidly progressed to severe respiratory distress in about 5 days, with many requiring mechanical ventilation. Some patients have died. Most cases have occurred in previously healthy young adults aged between 25-44 years old. Some health care workers have been affected.

Some specimens have tested positive for influenza A and B viruses; however it is not clear at this stage whether these cases represent isolated events or whether they are linked. Furthermore, there is **no** evidence at present to suggest infection with an unusual pathogen, including a novel strain of influenza.

Recommended Actions for Health Care Providers in Toronto:

- Given the severity of cases, it is prudent for front line providers to actively look for cases of SRI, particularly in persons recently returned (within 2 weeks) from Mexico, and report information to Toronto Public Health.
- Continue to identify and report unusual clusters of febrile respiratory illness (FRI) or SRI in the community or healthcare setting to Toronto Public Health.
- Patients who fit the above categories should initially be tested for the following pathogens at your local microbiology laboratory:
 - Common bacterial respiratory pathogens
 - Common respiratory viral pathogens such as influenza A/B, RSV, adenovirus, parainfluenza (Please note that results of rapid point of care tests may be falsely negative).
 - Atypical bacterial pathogens such as *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, *Chlamydomphila pneumonia*, *Legionella pneumophila*.
- Specimen collection guidelines can be found at:
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/pub/labs/specimen.html>
- Patients who fit the above categories should be isolated using droplet precautions and treated in a single room as per Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee guidelines, available at:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/infectious/diseases/best_prac/bp_fri_080406.pdf

Please report all suspect cases of febrile respiratory illness associated with recent travel to Mexico (in the last two weeks) to Toronto Public Health at:
416-392-7411, Monday to Friday, 8:30am - 4:30pm OR
416-690-2142, after regular work hours.