

# Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health



For Health Care Providers in Oxford County, Elgin County, and the City of St. Thomas

June 4, 2024

An Update from Dr. Ninh Tran, Medical Officer of Health at Southwestern Public Health

## Public Health: What You Need to Know

### PERTUSSIS CASES RISING

- There are rising cases of Pertussis in the SWPH region, and health care providers are asked to consider a pertussis diagnosis **regardless of vaccination status** for anyone who has the following symptoms:
  - A paroxysmal cough of any duration
  - A cough lasting 2 weeks or longer
  - A cough with inspiratory “whoop”
  - A cough ending in vomiting or gagging
  - Apnea or cyanosis without the characteristic paroxysmal cough, especially in infants
  - A cough in a person who has been exposed to pertussis.
- **ACTION:** Refer to our recent [Pertussis advisory \(May 31, 2024\)](#) for clinical guidance support.
- **ACTION:** Refer to the recently updated PHO Document for HCP regarding Pertussis: [Public Health Management Considerations for Pertussis](#)

### COVID-19 WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE UPDATE

- The Chief Medical Officer of Health has advised public health units that provincial COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance Initiative operated by the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks will wind down by July 31 2024.
- PHAC, however, will continue to work with the Ministry of Health to expand their wastewater surveillance network in Ontario from four sites in Toronto to additional sites across Ontario. This avoids duplication.
- Public Health Ontario will work closely with PHAC to coordinate data reporting. In the interim, PHAC’s wastewater surveillance data is published on [their public dashboard](#).

### ORAL POLIO VACCINE (OPV) CHANGES

- Based on changes to the CIG (Canadian Immunization Guide), all OPV given **on or after April 1, 2016** will now be considered invalid.
- This may mean that some children will require further polio vaccine (IPV) to meet the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) and Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA).

Southwestern Public Health  
www.swpublichealth.ca  
1-800-922-0096



- Individual IPV doses can be ordered from SWPH and added to your regular order. More information can be found [here](#).

#### AEFIs

- Public health units investigate Adverse Events Following Immunizations (AEFI), report the details for safety and surveillance, and provide follow up recommendations to the individual affected.
- Health care providers in Ontario are required to report any AEFI (or suspected AEFI) to their local public health unit.
- Public Health Ontario's website explains [what events should be reported](#) and provides the proper reporting [form](#) to submit to SWPH. Fax them to 519-633-0468 (Elgin) or 519-539-6206 (Oxford).

#### FRIDGE INSPECTIONS

- The SWPH vaccine team will soon reach out to set up time to have your annual fridge inspection completed.
- Reminder that if your fridge is not inspected annually, you will not be able to continue to order vaccines.
- The [Ministry of Health's Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines \(2021\)](#) outlines the expectations for staff handling provincially funded vaccines in health care provider offices.

## VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES UPDATES

#### LYME DISEASE: PROVINCIAL SITUATION

- In 2023, 1,795 confirmed and probable Lyme disease cases were reported in Ontario (an increase from previous season).
- Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis, and Powassan Virus were added to the Diseases of Public Health Significance in July 2023.
- Between July and December 2023, in Ontario there were:
  - 40 confirmed and probable cases of anaplasmosis reported (30 cases reported exposure in Ontario; All of the Ontario-reported exposures were within the Eastern Ontario region)
  - 15 confirmed and probable cases of babesiosis reported (9 reported exposure in Ontario; All of the Ontario-reported exposures were in Southern Ontario)
  - 0 Powassan virus cases were reported

#### LYME DISEASE: SWPH REGIONAL SITUATION

- The number of confirmed Lyme disease cases in the SWPH region has been increasing steadily since 2021, with a 3-fold increase in cases between 2021 (9) and 2023 (29).

#### UPDATED VECTOR-BORNE DISEASE RESOURCES

- [2024 Ontario Blacklegged Tick Established Risk Area Map](#). No new risk areas in SWPH region, however, a risk from the Chatham-Kent region extends into West Elgin.
- [Management of Tick Bites and Investigation of Early Localized Lyme Disease](#) (update coming soon)
- [Assessment and Prescribing Algorithm for Pharmacists: Antibiotic Prophylaxis to Prevent Lyme Disease](#)

#### TESTING CONSIDERATIONS

- Clinical signs and symptoms along with bloodwork are helpful to guide diagnosis after an exposure to Blacklegged ticks. Testing may be needed to distinguish between Lyme, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Powassan Virus.

- For individuals being investigated for Lyme disease, consider anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Powassan Virus as an alternate diagnosis or a co-infection.

Disease	Test	Turnaround Time	Consider if
<b>Lyme Disease</b>	<a href="#">Antibody testing</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">General Test Requisition</a></li> </ul>	≤7 days at Public Health Ontario Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptom onset &gt;2 weeks ago.</li> <li>No typical EM rash or if early disseminated/late Lyme symptoms.</li> <li>Repeat in 2-4 weeks if negative or indeterminate.</li> </ul>
<b>Anaplasmosis</b>	<a href="#">Blood PCR</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">General Test Requisition</a></li> </ul>	≤21 days at National Microbiology Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptom onset &lt;2 weeks ago.</li> <li>Severe symptoms.</li> <li>No typical EM rash.</li> <li>Poor response to non-doxycycline Lyme treatment.</li> <li>Abnormal bloodwork.</li> <li>Repeat in 2-4 weeks.</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">Antibody testing</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">General Test Requisition</a></li> </ul>	≤21 days at National Microbiology Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptom onset ≥2 weeks ago.</li> <li>Severe symptoms.</li> <li>No typical EM rash.</li> <li>Poor response to non-doxycycline Lyme treatment.</li> <li>Abnormal bloodwork.</li> <li>Repeat in 2-4 weeks.</li> </ul>
<b>Babesiosis</b>	<a href="#">Blood smears</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">General Test Requisition</a></li> </ul>	≤2 at multiple labs including Public Health Ontario Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe symptoms.</li> <li>Poor response to Lyme treatment.</li> <li>Abnormal bloodwork.</li> <li>Repeat in 24-48 hours if negative.</li> <li>Add PCR if repeatedly negative.</li> </ul>
<b>Powassan Virus</b>	<a href="#">Antibody testing</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">General Test Requisition</a> AND</li> <li><a href="#">Arbovirus Test Form</a></li> </ul>	≤8 days at Public Health Ontario Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encephalitic symptoms.</li> <li>Repeat in 2-4 weeks.</li> </ul>

Reference: Public Health Ontario, Lyme Disease Webinar (May 2024)

#### TICK IDENTIFICATION

- eTick.ca is a free electronic tick identification online service.
- Ticks that have been removed from a human can also be brought into the health unit for identification only (there is no testing done at the health unit for Lyme disease).

#### REPORTING VECTOR-BORNE DISEASE CASES

- Report a suspected or confirmed case through the [Lyme disease reporting form](#)
- Or call Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096 ext. 3500
- Or fax a [report](#) to 519-631-1682.