

Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health



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

December 13, 2024

An Update from Dr. Joyce Lock, Acting Medical Officer of Health at Southwestern Public Health

What You Need to Know

MEASLES UPDATE

- As of December 10, 2024, SWPH has investigated eight confirmed and 15 probable cases of measles (Ages of cases range from 1-26 years)
- The first case reported had a rash onset of October 29, 2024
- Almost all of the confirmed and probable cases are linked to the exposure in New Brunswick in October
- Please consider measles as a differential diagnosis for patients with symptoms consistent with measles and complete PCR testing (NP and throat swab and urine) AND serology (IgM and IgG) for diagnosis
- Risk factors most associated with infection include: un/under-immunization and being in close contact with someone with measles/measles-like illness
- Vaccine efficacy is close to 100 per cent with two doses of vaccine
- **Report any suspect cases of measles immediately 1-800-922-0096 ext 3500 or ext 0 after hours**

MEASLES GUIDANCE

- As measles cases continue to emerge in our region, Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) is reminding all healthcare providers to:
 1. **Promote measles vaccination:** Please review the vaccination status of your patients and encourage those who are unvaccinated or under-vaccinated to get the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine.
 - Per Ministry guidance, administer second doses of measles-containing and mumps-containing vaccine as soon as children turn 4 years of age to offer protection in school and community settings
 - Children with only one dose of measles-containing or mumps-containing vaccine may be excluded from school settings in the event of an exposure to infection until a second dose is given
 2. **Implement screening measures:** Please [print and display this PDF sign](#) at all entrances to your office or clinic. The sign advises individuals to avoid entering if they suspect they have measles. For more information, visit our website: [Measles Information for Healthcare Providers](#).

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



MUMPS UPDATE

- As of December 10, 2024, SWPH has investigated 32 confirmed cases and one probable case of mumps for school age children that live in the SWPH region
- The first case was reported on October 11
- The confirmed cases are linked to an outbreak at a private school
- Please consider mumps as a differential diagnosis for patients with symptoms consistent with mumps and complete serology AND PCR testing (buccal swab and urine) for diagnosis
- **Report any suspect cases of mumps immediately 1-800-922-0096 ext 3500 or ext 0 after hours**

FLU VACCINE

- There are no doses of high dose quadrivalent flu vaccine available for ordering from SWPH for the remainder of flu season; regular quadrivalent flu vaccine remains available for order from SWPH
- A small supply of trivalent adjuvanted vaccine (FluAd) is available to order from SWPH for those at highest risk of complications from flu

RSV

- Beyfortus 50 mg and Beyfortus 100 mg products available for order
 - With peak RSV activity predicted by the Ministry of Health to hit around mid-January 2025, please consider ordering Beyfortus for eligible infants and high-risk children now
 - Order forms are [available on our website](#)
- The Abrysvo vaccine is now available for order for [eligible older adults](#)

SHUT DOWN NOTICE: VACCINE INVENTORY AND ORDERS

- **Last day for vaccine orders in 2024:** Monday, December 16
- **Final pickups:** December 19 and 20
- **Ordering resumes in 2025:** January 6
- **First pickups:** January 9 and 10
- **Place urgent orders anytime during the holiday season via email at vpd@swpublichealth.ca or phone 1-800-922-0096** (ask to speak with a member or manager of the VPD team)

PHARMACY SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAM

- [Ontario Drug Benefit recipients](#) can access six months of free Nicotine Replacement Therapy and smoking cessation counseling through trained pharmacists
- **Eligible groups:**
 - Adults 65+ and individuals 24 and under without private insurance
 - Recipients of Ontario Works or [Ontario Disability Support Program](#) and participants in the [Trillium Drug Program](#)
- **Participating pharmacies:**
 - **Oxford County:** Pharmasave (Norwich, Ingersoll, Thamesford, Tillsonburg), All About Health Remedies, Shoppers Drug Mart (Woodstock, Norwich, Tillsonburg)
 - **St. Thomas:** Yurek Pharmacy, Elmdale Medical Pharmacy, Sunset Pharmacy, Wellington Medical Pharmacy, Shoppers Drug Mart (204 First Ave., 410 Talbot St. W)
 - **Elgin County:** Pharmasave (Shedden), Hills Pharmacy (Aylmer), West Elgin Pharmacy (West Lorne)

NICOTINE POUCHES: A GROWING CONCERN FOR YOUTH

- **Nicotine pouches** (e.g., Zonnic) are marketed as a tobacco-free alternative for adults but pose risks for youth due to:
 - High nicotine content leading to addiction
 - Impact on adolescent brain development (attention, learning, impulse control)
 - Misleading “tobacco-free” marketing
- **Health Canada measures (August 2024) to limit youth access:**
 - Restrict advertising and youth-appealing packaging
 - Limit sales to pharmacies only (behind the counter)
 - Allow flavours mint or menthol only
 - Require addiction warnings on packaging
 - Mandate pre-approval of packaging to ensure no youth appeal

PREVENTING CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

- **Local trends:** No female syphilis cases locally (2013–2017) - Since the first case in 2018, infections among females have risen, reflecting a provincial trend
- **Shifting ratios:** Male-to-female case ratio dropped from 17:1 (2013) to 5:1 (2022), driven by rising female infections
- **Age range:** Infections in males span 20–79 years, while females are primarily 15–39 years. **Source:** [Croteau S. Infectious diseases: an analysis of cases and outbreaks in the Southwestern Public Health region. SWPH; 2024.](#)
- SWPH is running a social media campaign in December to raise awareness among women of childbearing age about syphilis
- **Focus areas:**
 - Testing when planning or during pregnancy
 - Treatment and follow-up
 - Encouraging repeat testing during pregnancy if other sexual partners are involved
- **For health care providers:**
 - Take thorough sexual health histories to identify clients needing multiple tests during pregnancy
 - Ask about changes in sexual partners at each prenatal visit
 - Promote repeat testing during pregnancy if there is a change in sexual partner or multiple sexual partners

REMINDER: OUR FACILITIES ARE SCENT-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

- As a reminder, all SWPH facilities are designated as scent-free environments to ensure a safe and comfortable space for everyone
- When visiting our facilities to pick up vaccines or other materials, please remind your staff to refrain from wearing scented products as this helps us maintain a healthy and welcoming environment