

Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health



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

October 10, 2024

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

What You Need to Know

SWPH RESPIRATORY DASHBOARD

- The [Respiratory Virus Activity Dashboard](#) provides an overview of respiratory virus activity in the SWPH region, including influenza, COVID-19, and RSV. It displays percent positivity rates, which can help estimate the intensity of virus circulation.
- For provincial data, visit the [Public Health Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool](#).

FALL 2024 COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAM: HIGH-RISK POPULATIONS

- The following high-risk and priority populations for [COVID-19 immunization are recommended](#) to receive vaccine **as soon as it becomes available**:
 - Adults ≥ 65 years of age
 - Children 6 months to 4 years of age
 - Individuals 6 months of age and older who are/have:
 - Pregnant individuals
 - Residents, staff, and care providers in congregate living settings (e.g., chronic care facilities, retirement homes)
 - Healthcare providers
 - First responders
 - From First Nations, Métis or Inuit communities
 - Members of racialized and other equity deserving communities
 - [Underlying medical conditions](#) that places them at higher risk of severe COVID-19, including children with complex health needs
 - Significant exposure to birds and mammals (such as poultry, livestock, slaughterhouses, and processing plant workers, wildlife officers/researchers, and veterinarians)

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FALL 2024 COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAM: GENERAL POPULATION

- Immunization for general population begins October 28, 2024, in Ontario.
- Eligible Individuals aged 6 months and older may receive their COVID-19 vaccination from a participating pharmacist or primary care provider.
 - A list of pharmacies offering COVID-19 vaccine can be found at [COVID-19 pharmacy vaccine locations](#)
 - Individuals are encouraged to contact the pharmacy directly to ensure availability of COVID-19 vaccine and appointments, and to confirm any minimum age considerations at the pharmacy.
- SWPH will offer limited COVID-19 appointments for eligible individuals between six months and 4 years of age only. Smaller walk-in community vaccination clinics will also be offered for the general population. Information will be updated on [our website](#).

RSV PROTECTION FOR ADULTS AND INFANTS

- The [Ministry of Health has announced](#) an expansion of the publicly funded Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) prevention program for infants this fall. High uptake of these new protections is expected to significantly improve infant health by reducing RSV infection rates and preventing thousands of hospital admissions and primary care visits (BORN, 2024).
- Two publicly funded products will be available in fall 2024 to provide seasonal protection:
 1. **Beyfortus®** (Nirsevimab, a monoclonal antibody) – For infants born in or approaching their first RSV season and children up to 24 months who are at high risk for RSV.
 - *This product is not currently in stock at SWPH but is expected to be available by mid to late October 2024.*
 2. **Abrysvo™** (a prenatal vaccine) – Available for pregnant individuals who are 32-36 weeks pregnant and expected to deliver during the RSV season.
 - *Limited quantities are available. Place and order using the [online form](#).*
- For detailed guidance, refer to the [Ministry of Health's recommendations](#).

PERTUSSIS UPDATE

- Since January, SWPH has recorded 56 confirmed cases of pertussis. Of these, 73 per cent were either unimmunized or too young to have completed the primary vaccine series as per the recommended schedule.
- Only two cases required hospitalization. Pertussis activity in the SWPH region has remained high for two years.

GRADE 7 VACCINATIONS

- Starting this month, SWPH will be visiting local elementary schools to administer up to three vaccines to eligible Grade 7 students, with parental consent, through the school immunization program: Hepatitis B, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and Meningococcal disease (Men C-ACYW).
- Grade 7 students can also obtain these vaccines through their healthcare provider.
- **ACTION:** Healthcare providers can order these vaccines through our [online order form](#).
- **ACTION:** Remind patients in your roster that any vaccines administered to Grade 7 students must be [self-reported to SWPH](#).

RESOURCE FROM ONTARIO OXFORD HEALTH TEAM

- The Oxford Ontario Health Team (OHT) has developed a [resource](#) to assist community members in finding local healthcare options while they search for a new primary care provider. This resource will be regularly updated by the Oxford OHT and is [available online](#).