

November 16, 2022

To Community Partners, Organizations and Businesses in Simcoe Muskoka,

### **Re: High Rates of Respiratory Illness**

With the cooler weather upon us, we are seeing an increase in a variety of respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19, Influenza (Flu) and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). Yesterday, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kieran Moore, strongly recommended that Ontarians wear masks in all indoor public settings, including school and childcare settings. Ontario is facing the "triple threat" of higher and earlier than normal rates of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza as well as the ongoing risk of COVID-19. Children under 5 years, the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk of serious illness, and we are already seeing the impact on the health care system with more medical visits and hospitalizations. These trends are expected to continue as the fall season progresses and we spend more time indoors.

To protect against this triple threat of infection and severe illness, I am strongly recommending that everyone in our community use multiple layers of protection against these viruses. I also encourage you to consider implementing protective measures in your own business or organization whenever possible to protect your clients, patients and customers from spreading and getting these viruses. Protective measures include the following:

### **Know your Risk**

The [Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Community Risk Level](#) is updated weekly. At this point in time the risk of COVID-19 transmission is high, with a need for the multilayered approach (vaccination, staying home when ill, and mask use in indoor public settings) to help prevent transmission. For more information, please refer to my letter sent via email on September 23, 2022 re: [Health unit launches weekly update on local COVID-19 Community Risk Level](#).

### **Wear a Mask**

**The health unit strongly recommends that all individuals wear a well-fitted three-layer mask or medical mask in indoor public settings.** This recommendation includes children two to five years of age if they can tolerate a mask. I recommend that you encourage and support your staff and customers/clients to wear a mask inside your office/organization space. In addition, masking at home is strongly recommended if you have symptoms and have at-risk people in your household, including children under five years of age, older adults, or those with medical conditions.

### **Screen Daily and Stay Home if Feeling Unwell**

Please ask your employees and customers/clients to screen for symptoms daily using the [Screening Tool](#) and follow the instructions. If a staff or customer/client is sick with any symptom(s) of COVID-19, cold or flu, they should stay home.

### **Get Vaccinated**

Getting the flu shot and staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations is the best way to prevent serious illness. Visit our [website](#) to find out what options are available in your community. As an employer, please consider establishing and implementing an influenza and/or COVID-19 vaccination policy at your workplace. Information on [COVID-19 immunization policies for workplaces](#) is available on our website.

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**Wash Your Hands and Clean High Touch Surfaces**

Please encourage and support your staff and customers/clients to wash their hands often using proper hand hygiene. Disinfect high touch surfaces in your business or organization often and as part of regular infection prevention control processes.

When we use many layers of protection, we lower the risk of illness for ourselves and those around us, especially the most vulnerable. For more information, contact Health Connection at 1-877-721-7520, or visit our [website](#).

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

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