

COVID-19 Update for Partners

October 21, 2021

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Key Local Issues

Annual Influenza Vaccine

- The flu vaccine is offered free of charge to anyone over the age of six months who either lives, works, or goes to school in Ontario.
- The initial supply of flu vaccine is now available and targeted to individuals at most risk.
- The flu shot is especially important for children under five, people who are pregnant and those 65 years and older who are at higher risk of hospitalization and flu-related complications, such as pneumonia, heart attack or, in some cases, death.
- In November, the flu vaccine will be available to anyone 6 months age and or older. Individuals two years of age and older can get a flu shot at your doctors/nurse practitioners office, public health units and participating pharmacies. Children six months to two years old can get their flu shot from a doctor, nurse practitioner or local public health unit.
- It is important to remember the flu shot does not protect against COVID-19, but it will help reduce the risk of getting the flu and of getting the flu and COVID-19 at the same time.
- Some [symptoms of COVID-19](#) are similar to the flu and it can be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Because of this, it is important to complete a [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to help you determine if you need to get tested and for guidance on next steps.
- If you haven't already, you can get your COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as your flu shot as the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\) now recommends](#) that COVID-19 vaccine may be given at the same time as the influenza vaccine.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- The health unit has started planning for vaccination of 5- to 11-year-olds in anticipation of Health Canada approval this fall.
- Community members who are eligible for vaccination can help protect children who cannot yet be vaccinated by getting vaccinated themselves.

COVID Vaccination Update: Equitable Coverage

- The vaccine coverage rate is closing between those living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, who have had a lower coverage rate, in comparison with the more affluent (or better resourced) neighbourhoods, who've had a higher coverage rate.

- Recent data shows there is no longer a difference in vaccine coverage rates across neighbourhoods based on ethno-cultural diversity, such that communities with all levels of diversity now have a similar coverage rate.
- This progress in more equitable vaccine coverage may be a result of collaboration that has occurred between Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) and a wide range of community and health care partners in recent months, to make vaccination more accessible to harder to reach populations.

Third Doses for Residents of Retirement Homes and Congregate Settings

- Last week the Ministry of Health announced that the remaining retirement homes and residents of congregate living settings are eligible for third doses at the same five-month interval that was used for long-term care homes and higher risk retirement homes. Third doses of vaccine are being offered to all eligible residents of the 30 long-term care homes in Simcoe Muskoka, with more than 2,400 residents receiving a third dose to date. Anticipated completion of this work is early November.
- To date more than 5,200 Simcoe Muskoka residents have received a third dose of vaccine.

School Update

- It is crucial everyone attending school or childcare complete the daily screening and follow the directions on the screening tool. Community members should also continue to monitor for symptoms, stay home when unwell and seek testing as soon as possible.
- Getting tested quickly when you feel unwell supports the health unit to receive positive test results quickly, allowing us to investigate and contact individuals who may have been exposed as quickly as possible.
- Anyone who is a new confirmed case or probable case, as well as any unvaccinated and/or symptomatic close contacts of a confirmed case are legally required to isolate. Under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Section 22 Class Orders, local Medical Officers of Health can order individuals to remain in isolation. Failure to follow these orders can result in fines.

School-Based Clinics for Grade 7 Vaccines Not Proceeding

- With the ongoing and anticipated increase in demand in the coming months for COVID-19 vaccination, SMDHU has made the difficult decision to not proceed with school-based immunizations for students in Grades 7 and 8.
- SMDHU will continue to dedicate resources to protecting our community from COVID-19, which remains the top provincial priority for vaccination efforts. As such, the health unit's immunization program will continue to support COVID-19 vaccination for those eligible for third doses, along with planning for immunization of 5- to 11-year-old children.
- Students who are in Grade 7 currently will be vaccinated next school year at school-based clinics. As soon as we can offer catch-up opportunities for students currently in Grade 8 and those in Grade 9, we will communicate with schools and families to ensure that students can receive these vaccines.
- For students who do not want to wait to receive these vaccines, primary care providers can order the school program vaccines using the Temporary Grade 7 Vaccine Order Form for [Barrie/Midland/Collingwood/Cookstown](#) and [Gravenhurst/Huntsville/Orillia](#).

Dr. Gardner's next media briefing will take place on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. Previous SMDHU MOH media briefings are posted on the SMDHU [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel.

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Data (As of October 21, 2021)

Total Confirmed Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Oct 10-16 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (# change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (# change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* (Target 90%)
13,859	159 (+7%)	111 (-18%)	262 (no change)	9 (-2)	82%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the 111 new cases reported last week, 59% were unvaccinated 2% were partially vaccinated, and 39% were fully vaccinated. The rate of COVID-19 infection among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible Simcoe Muskoka population is 10 times higher than it is for fully vaccinated population and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations is 23 times higher. There are 4 active outbreaks (two in educational settings and two in institutional settings). <p>More local data available at: SMDHU COVID-19 HealthSTATS page and COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard</p>					

Local Media Updates (Since Oct. 14, 2021 Partner Update)

- 3 students positive for COVID-19 at Bracebridge's Monck Public School ([article](#))
- Top 10 take-aways from Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 media briefing, Oct. 20 ([article](#))
- Town of Gravenhurst employees must provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination by Nov. 1 ([article](#))
- Kids 5-11 could get COVID-19 vaccine in Simcoe-Muskoka 'within this calendar year to begin with': Health unit ([article](#))
- 18 COVID-19 cases at Holy Cross Catholic School in Innisfil ([article](#))
- Routine Grade 7/8 immunization postponed anticipating COVID vaccines for kids ([article](#))
- Union wants inmate transfers stopped as another COVID-19 outbreak hits CNCC ([article](#))
- 'Some people think that it's our rules': COVID-19 vaccine passport system moves through Bradford ([article](#))
- COVID-19 outbreak declared at Penetanguishene jail ([article](#))
- Mandatory vaccines for town staff and council to be considered Oct. 25 ([article](#))
- RVH fires 14 people, places 45 staff and four docs on unpaid leave over vaccine hesitancy ([article](#))
- 'We don't like turning people away,' Restaurant owners want capacity limits removed ([article](#))
- Caution is crucial as COVID-19 restrictions loosen: Dr. Nathanson ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data

Ontario (As of Oct. 21, 2021)					
Total Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Oct 15-21 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* (Target 90%)
596,280	3,356 (-3%)	2,843 (-15%)	9,827 (+18)	274 (+20)	83%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of new cases 57% are unvaccinated, 4% are partially vaccinated, 32% are fully vaccinated and 7% have an unknown vaccination status. 					

- In Ontario, unvaccinated individuals are 7 times more likely to catch COVID, 17 times more likely to be in hospital and 23 times more likely to be a patient in the intensive care unit compared with people who are vaccinated.
- Areas with the highest rate of active cases per 100,000 population are: Lambton (69), Eastern Ontario (68), Windsor-Essex County (49), Sudbury and District (47), and Chatham-Kent (38).
[Ontario COVID-19 case data](#), [Public Health Ontario Data Tool](#), [daily](#) and [weekly](#) epidemiologic summaries

Canada (As of Oct. 20, 2021)

Total Cases (includes confirmed and probable cases)	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New Cases in the last 7 days (% change from previous week)	Total Deaths in the last 7 days (change from previous week)	Population 12+ fully vaccinated
1,690,258	29,798 (-17%)	20,043 (-13%)	28,644 (+277)	82%

Weekly case highlights for Oct 3 - 9 compared to the previous week:

- The weekly number of new cases increased for Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut compared to the previous week.
- On average the rate of new COVID-19 cases among unvaccinated individuals was 8 times higher, and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalized cases among unvaccinated individuals was 26 times higher than in fully vaccinated individuals.

For more national data, see: [COVID-19 daily epidemiology update](#)

Global Data (as of 17:09 October 20, 2021)

Total confirmed cases	New Cases Oct 11-17 (% change from previous week)	Total Deaths (Change from previous week)
241,411,380	2,825,222 (-2.3%)	4,912,112 +46,884 (no % change)

- The European Region continued to be the only region reporting increases in cases and deaths in the past week.
- In the last week the highest number of global cases were reported in: United States, United Kingdom, Russia, Turkey, and India.

For more international data, see: [WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#),
[WHO weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 13 October 2021](#)

Provincial, National and Global Media Updates (Since Oct. 14 Partner Update)

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Free Flu Shot Available to all Ontarians in November ([news release](#))
- GO-VAXX Mobile Vaccine Clinics Achieve Major Milestone ([news release](#))
- Enhanced COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate with QR Code and Verify Ontario App Available for Download Starting October 15 ([news release](#))
- Using your Enhanced Vaccine Certificate: Frequently Asked Questions ([backgrounder](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Family doctors in Ontario urged to find balance between virtual care and in-person visits as emergency rooms grapple with huge bottlenecks, wait times ([article](#))

- Cambridge woman outraged after late sister's photos used in Ontario MPP's anti-vaccination posts ([article](#))
- Staff COVID-19 vaccination rates for 31 major Ontario school boards ([article](#))
- Toronto launching info campaign for parents ahead of child COVID-19 vaccinations ([article](#))
- Vaccine mandate for hospital staff would reduce staff shortage risk ([article](#))
- Ontario now plans to take a dozen critically ill COVID patients from Saskatchewan ([article](#))
- 'We need to fix it quickly,' Ontario's long-term care sector faces staffing crisis ([article](#))
- Still unvaccinated in Ontario? Expect a call from the government ([article](#))
- Ryerson rolls out COVID-19 policy that limits access to university activities for unvaccinated ([article](#))
- Two Ontario doctors ordered to stop issuing exemptions for COVID-19 vaccinations ([article](#))
- Ontario's vaccine passport app is here. Experts say new system does nothing to prevent fraud ([article](#))
- Biggest Ontario universities see high vaccine coverage ahead of immunization deadlines ([article](#))
- Ford asks hospitals for input on potential COVID-19 vaccine mandate ([article](#))
- Should transplant recipients require COVID vaccines? One Toronto hospital network says yes ([article](#))
- Ontario gym and restaurant owners want COVID-19 restrictions lifted ASAP - but health experts urge caution ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- Using Canada's COVID-19 proof of vaccination for travel ([backgrounder](#))
- Affordable high-speed Internet for low-income seniors and families ([news release](#))
- The Government of Canada assists the Northwest Territories with COVID-19 response ([news release](#))
- Health Canada receives submission from Pfizer-BioNTech to authorize the use of Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine in children 5 to 11 years of age ([statement](#))
- Importance of small businesses in Canada's economic recovery ([news release](#))
- Support for long-term care homes in Ontario extended to manage COVID-19 outbreaks ([news release](#))
- Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada on October 15, 2021 ([statement](#))
- Border measures remain in place for travellers entering or returning to Canada ([news release](#))
- New App Provides Remote Access to COVID-19 Resources for Workplaces ([news release](#))

Other National News:

- Health Canada considers COVID-19 vaccine for young children ([article](#))
- Canada to receive 2.9M doses of Pfizer's pediatric COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- Canada's international travel vaccine passport - you won't be able to fly without it ([article](#))
- Canada committed to partnership with Novavax despite report of production problems ([article](#))
- B.C. doctors group calls on province to focus on COVID-19 aerosol transmission ([article](#))
- COVID-19 vaccine for 5-11 year-olds hasn't been approved yet, but U.S. has a rollout plan ([article](#))
- Saskatchewan's chief medical officer of health breaks into tears during COVID-19 modelling ([article](#))
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination required to enter Quebec hospitals, long-term care homes ([article](#))
- Only fully vaccinated people to be allowed in House of Commons precinct ([article](#))
- Doctors from diverse backgrounds hope video series helps address hesitancy ([article](#))
- Pandemic learning loss is real and kids need help to catch up, education experts say ([article](#))
- Vaccine allergy? Experts say most past reactions not valid reason for exemptions ([article](#))
- The vaccine converts: Why they changed their minds about the COVID-19 shot ([article](#))
- Firing health-care workers who refuse to vaccinate raises ethical concerns: experts ([article](#))
- CDC says people with mixed-dose COVID-19 vaccinations will be eligible to enter U.S. ([article](#))
- Study suggests correlation between COVID-19 rates and greenspace inequity ([article](#))
- The Prairies are showing Canada what a COVID-19 disaster looks like ([article](#))
- B.C. health officials impose additional COVID-19 restrictions on northern B.C. ([article](#))

International Updates

- Moscow to shut shops, schools as COVID-19 deaths soar ([article](#))
- Belgium braces for another surge in COVID-19 cases ([article](#))
- New COVID-19 mutation of Delta variant under close watch in U.K. ([article](#))
- Why are COVID cases spiking in the U.K., but dwindling in Japan? ([article](#))
- New COVID-19 cases in Japan's capital plummet to 11-month low ([article](#))
- The WHO hopes its new panel can determine the origin of COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Pfizer-BioNTech ask EU agency to OK vaccine for kids 5-11 ([article](#))
- FDA panel endorses lower-dose Moderna COVID shot for booster ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

Recent changes to SMDHU [website](#):

Main Page

- My COVID-19 test was positive, now what? ([link](#))
- I am a close contact of a person who recently tested positive for COVID-19 ([link](#))

Stop the Spread

- Gatherings, Events and Celebrating Holidays ([link](#))
- Planning your wedding during COVID-19 ([link](#))

Getting your Vaccination

- Pop-up clinics ([link](#))

Proof of Vaccination

- How to access your enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code ([link](#))

Operating Your Business Safely

- A letter of instruction from SMDHU's medical officer of health (dated October 14, 2021) to owners/operators of any indoor facilities (or any premises or part of a premises) used for sports and recreational fitness activities in the County of Simcoe, the District of Muskoka, and the Cities of Orillia and Barrie ([link](#))
- COVID-19 proof of vaccination requirement ([link](#))
- Resources for employers and workplaces COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Workplace Safety Plan, Screening and Proof of Vaccination ([link](#))
- Facilities for Sports & Recreational Fitness Activities ([web link](#))
- Organized Public Events & Gatherings ([web link](#))
- Recreational water facilities ([web link](#))

Partners and Municipalities

- Updated letter of instruction ([link](#))
- Faith-based organizations ([link](#))

HealthSTATS:

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#)

SMDHU Health Connection:

- SMDHU Health Connection responds to calls and emails about COVID-19. Contact Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 5829 or via [email](#), Monday-Friday - 8:30am-4:30pm
- **PLEASE NOTE: We are experiencing high call volumes and our response times are longer than usual.**

Credible Sources of Information

- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Centre for Effective Practice COVID-19 Resource Centre](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)