

COVID-19 Update for Partners

November 4, 2021

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Key Local Issues

Rollout of COVID-19 boosters

- Ontario has expanded the eligibility for receiving a COVID-19 booster dose to additional high-risk groups that may be at increased risk of lowered protection over time since their initial vaccinations, including:
 - Adults between the ages of 70 and 79.
 - People who received two doses of the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine.
 - Adults in or from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.
 - Adults who are front-line healthcare workers who have direct in-person contact with patients and who were vaccinated with a very short interval between their first and second doses (three or four weeks).
- Vaccination with two doses of mRNA vaccine has shown to provide powerful and persistent protection against COVID-19, however these booster doses will provide enhanced protection for those at risk of gradual waning immunity and at risk for severe disease. Third doses are particularly important for adults over 80 who are at highest risk (of severe illness and waning protection), as noted by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).
- Community clinics throughout Simcoe and Muskoka will open on November 15. Appointments for these community clinics and the Barrie Immunization Clinic at 29 Sperling Drive will be available through the provincial booking system starting on November 6.

COVID-19 vaccination for 5-11-year-olds

- Health Canada is currently reviewing data from Pfizer-BioNTech for a COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5-to-11 years. While we wait for approval and direction from Health Canada, NACI and the Province of Ontario, we have added a [page on our website](#) dedicated to providing information and updates to the public on COVID-19 vaccination for children 5-to-11 years of age.

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) pauses non-COVID-19 immunization services

- Following last month's announcement that the health unit is pausing school based immunization programming due to continuing COVID-19 demands, it is now also placing publicly-funded child

and adult [routine immunization](#) services at our offices across the region on hold. Any existing routine immunization appointments will be honoured.

- As has been necessary throughout the pandemic, SMDHU has needed to shift resources to protect our community from COVID-19, which remains the top provincial priority for vaccination efforts. As such we are working to ensure we are prepared to implement the third and booster dose roll out, and the COVID-19 vaccination roll out for 5-11-year-olds once the vaccine is approved by Health Canada.
- Individuals who do not want to wait to receive their routine vaccines and boosters should contact their primary care provider, who is able to order these vaccines from SMDHU.
- COVID-19 vaccinations continue to be a public health priority and it is advised that individuals get vaccinated for COVID-19 as soon as possible at a [pop-up vaccination clinic](#), a local pharmacy or through their health care provider.

HealthSTATS update: Vaccination rates by municipality

- On October 29, SMDHU began using a more accurate process for assigning individuals to specific municipalities based on their postal code of residence in order to calculate vaccination rates by municipality.
- Previously, municipalities were assigned using a method where an individual's postal code could only be assigned to a single municipality. While this works well for urban areas where postal codes are unique to a given municipality, in rural areas of Simcoe Muskoka, many postal codes span multiple municipalities. When this occurs, the postal code was randomly assigned to one of the possible municipalities, resulting in certain municipalities having either higher or lower estimated vaccination coverage rates than they should.
- The assignment of postal codes now considers the municipalities' population sizes and the proportion of each municipality's population that it contributes to the overall population of each postal codes' catchment area. This new allocation process will have little to no impact on urban areas but greatly improve the accuracy for rural areas.

COVID-19 testing in schools

- Last week the province announced that it would increase access to low-barrier testing options to support in-person student attendance at school and reduce disruptions to families and referred to several different tests and situations where we may use them.
- SMDHU continues to review the different kinds of tests that are being made available and are awaiting further details from the province on how it could be implemented with our school partners.
- The most important kind of testing at this time is for those who have COVID-19 symptoms – even if they are mild – and those who have been identified as close contacts to get tested with a PCR test. We recommend that this testing be completed at an assessment centre.

School outbreaks

- We continue to be asked why we are not closing schools when there are outbreaks declared.
- Going to school is important for the development, mental health and socialization of children. To keep schools safe and open for learning, we continue to work closely with local school boards to ensure stringent COVID-19 safety measures remain in place.
- Any time someone tests positive for COVID-19, and attended school during their contagious period, there is an investigation completed to identify close contacts. SMDHU decides if additional measures are needed in each individual situation.
- We only close schools when it is absolutely necessary, due to the implications school closures have on students and the school community.

Dr. Gardner's next media briefing will take place on **Wednesday, November 17, 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 Oct 28, 2021)					
Total Confirmed Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Oct 24-30 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (# change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (# change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* (Target 90%)
14,151	229 (+38%)	127 (+4%)	267 (+3)	22 (+13)	83%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the 127 new cases reported last week, 61% were unvaccinated, 4% were partially vaccinated, and 35% were fully vaccinated. From September 5th to October 30th, the rate of COVID-19 infection among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible Simcoe Muskoka population is 8 times higher than it is for fully vaccinated population and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations is 13 times higher. There are 12 active outbreaks (six in educational settings, one in a congregate setting, one in a community setting and four 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 28, 2021 Partner Update)

- Simcoe Muskoka's COVID-19 cases above provincial rate for first time since pandemic began ([article](#))
- Mapleview Community Church issues precautionary message amid positive COVID tests ([article](#))
- Number of deaths, hospitalizations due to COVID-19 continues to climb in Simcoe-Muskoka region ([article](#))
- Six COVID-19 cases at Assikinack Public School in Barrie ([article](#))
- 98% of Simcoe County staff rolled up their sleeves, 38 workers on unpaid leave ([article](#))
- Visiting suspended at Pines in Bracebridge as COVID-19 outbreak status continues ([article](#))
- RVH containing, closely monitoring COVID outbreak that has claimed two lives ([article](#))
- RVH terminates 39 employees for not complying with vaccination, testing policies ([article](#))
- 93% of BWG staff fully vaccinated against COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Barrie council news: City making room for kids' COVID-19 vaccine clinics ([article](#))
- COVID-19 news: Simcoe-Muskoka passes 14,000-case milestone, two new deaths reported ([article](#))
- Innisfil's COVID vaccine coverage rate among the lowest in Simcoe County ([article](#))
- Beloved father, teammate dies following COVID-19 outbreak among men's hockey players ([article](#))
- RVH admits its first COVID-19 patient from out of province ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data					
Ontario (As of Nov 4, 2021)					
Total Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Oct 29-Nov 3	Total deaths (change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* (Target 90%)

		(% change from previous week)			
601,524	3189 (+6%)	2684 (+5%)	9,891 (+26)	234 (+37)	85%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Of the new cases, 52% are unvaccinated, 4% are partially vaccinated, 36% are fully vaccinated and 8% have an unknown vaccination status.In Ontario, unvaccinated individuals are 6 times more likely to catch COVID-19, 17 times more likely to be in hospital and 32 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: Sudbury and District (85), Haldimand-Norfolk (45), Chatham-Kent (44), Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington (39), Algoma (38), and Niagara Region (38). <p>Weekly highlights from Oct 17 – 23 compared to the previous week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The rate of cases has decreased for all age groups except for cases aged 5 to 11 which reported an increase in rate from 38.5 to 40.1 cases per 100,000 population. Cases aged 5 to 11 continue to report the highest rate of cases in week 42.The rate of disease decreased across all age groups with the sharpest decline in children aged 5 to 11. <p>For more national data, see Ontario COVID-19 case data, Public Health Ontario Data Tool, daily and weekly epidemiologic summaries</p>					
Canada (as of Nov 3, 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 (change from previous week)	Population 12+ fully vaccinated	
1,722,570	23,150 (-9%)	18,298 (-9%)	29,095 (+214)	83%	
<p>Weekly case highlights for Oct 17 - 23 compared to the previous week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The weekly number of new cases decreased in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories and Nunavut compared to the previous week.The weekly number of new cases increased for Newfoundland and Labrador compared to the previous week.The weekly number of new cases stayed relatively the same for British Columbia, Manitoba, and the Yukon 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 25 times higher than in fully vaccinated individuals. <p>For more national data, see: COVID-19 daily epidemiology update - link weekly epi report (link changes every week)</p>					
Global (as of 5:21pm CET, 3 November 2021)					
Total confirmed cases	New Cases Oct 25-31 (% change from previous week)		Total Deaths (Change from previous week)		
247,472,724	3,052,925 (+4%)		5,012,337 (+8%)		

- During the week of October 25 to 31, the global number of new cases increased slightly (4%) compared to that of the previous week, with the European Union accounting for more than half (60%) of weekly cases and the only region again reporting an increase in cases.
- In the last week the highest number of global cases were reported in: United States, Russia, United Kingdom, Turkey, and Ukraine.

For more international data, see: [WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#) and WHO weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - [2 November 2021](#)

Provincial, National and Global Media Updates *(Since Oct. 28 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Ontario Expanding Booster Eligibility to More Ontarians ([news release](#))
- Apple Wallet Update Now Compatible with Ontario Vaccine Certificate ([news release](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Low vaccination rates in Toronto Indigenous communities raise fears for winter ([article](#))
- Doug Ford refuses to make COVID-19 vaccines mandatory for Ontario's hospital workers ([article](#))
- Number of Ontario schools with at least one active case of COVID has dipped below 500 for the first time in six weeks ([article](#))
- Ontario to offer COVID-19 boosters to everyone 12 and up, with those 70-plus eligible this week ([article](#))
- 4 doctors not co-operating with investigations into COVID practices: Ontario medical regulator ([article](#))
- Ontario has received about 26 million rapid COVID-19 tests. Why is it so hard to find one? ([article](#))
- GTA teachers on sick leaves have doubled: Has pandemic burnout taken a toll? ([article](#))
- Pandemic does not have a set end date ([article](#))
- Elliott says Ontario has enough feedback to make decision on vaccine mandate for hospitals ([article](#))
- Nearly 1,300 City of Toronto workers are either unvaccinated or have refused to disclose status ([article](#))
- Metrolinx suspends unvaccinated employees, resulting in 89 bus trip cancellations Monday ([article](#))
- Study on pandemic's impact on families shows depression, anxiety this year worse than in the first wave ([article](#))
- Opinion: Kofi Hope: It's easy to make anti-vaxxers pandemic villains, but they aren't the only ones acting like they're on 'Squid Game' ([article](#))
- 'Is this my life forever?' The unexpected — and frightening — impact of Long COVID on young Canadians ([article](#))
- Nearly 70 per cent of Ontario parents of kids 5 to 11 planning to get them vaccinated, poll says ([article](#))
- MPPs call on Hillier to apologize for 'string of disreputable conduct' in unanimous vote ([article](#))
- Ontario won't add COVID-19 to list of nine diseases that elementary and secondary students must be immunized against: official ([article](#))
- Toronto sending vaccination survey to parents as Ontario reports 93 more school-related cases ([article](#))
- More than half of remaining active COVID-19 cases in Ontario found in GTHA schools ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- Almost all public servants fully vaccinated against COVID-19 ([statement](#))
- Update on Policy on COVID-19 Vaccination for the Core Public Administration including the RCMP ([backgrounder](#))
- Chief Public Health Officer of Canada on October 29, 2021 ([statement](#)) ([remarks](#))
- Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (CCMOH): COVID-19 Vaccination and the Use of COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters ([statement](#))
- Government of Canada announces additional Canadian airports accepting international passenger flights ([news release](#))
- Canada announces results of matching fund with UNICEF Canada ([media release](#))

Other National News:

- Why doctors are so worried about pregnant people getting COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Post-pandemic health systems could be challenged by COVID-19 spending spike: CIHI ([article](#))
- Fully vaccinated and ready for a winter getaway? It may cost more than you think ([article](#))
- Health Canada says its tweet that the review of kids' COVID-19 vaccine will still take months was wrong ([article](#))
- Health Canada reviewing AstraZeneca antibody drug to prevent symptomatic COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Quebec reports 525 new COVID cases ahead of update on health worker vaccine mandate ([article](#))
- Air Canada suspends more than 800 unvaccinated workers under new federal rules ([article](#))
- Quebec predicts it will vaccinate kids 'before Christmas,' with groundwork already laid ([article](#))
- Ethical decisions: Weighing risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccination in children ages 5-11 ([article](#))
- Dancing karaoke to return to Quebec bars, high school students can ditch masks in class ([article](#))
- 8 more airports will open to international flights Nov. 30 ([article](#))
- U.S. will allow land entry again as soon as border crossings open on Nov. 8 ([article](#))
- COVID-19 vaccination rates among eastern European diaspora become cause for concern ([article](#))
- Most Canadians agree with a COVID test to drive back from U.S. — unless they plan a trip ([article](#))
- 'Systemic ageism' to blame for COVID-19 deaths in Quebec care homes, inquest hears ([article](#))
- Biotech firm Novavax submits COVID-19 vaccine for approval by Health Canada ([article](#))
- WestJet suspends nearly 300 unvaccinated employees ([article](#))
- 'Out of control': Sask. doctors say record reported COVID-19 death toll in Oct. sign of dire situation ([article](#))
- FDA approves kids' COVID-19 vaccine in U.S.; Canada likely close behind ([article](#))
- A crisis for home care: Drove of workers leave for hospitals, nursing homes ([article](#))
- Managers will decide on religious vaccine exemptions for federal public servants ([article](#))
- RCMP says it's ready to deploy reservists to replace unvaccinated Mounties on leave ([article](#))
- Pandemic shifting Ottawa's unhoused population onto streets, survey expected to show ([article](#))

International Updates

- U.K. 1st country to authorize use of Merck's coronavirus antiviral pill ([article](#))
- CDC approves Pfizer's COVID vaccine for kids 5 to 11 in the U.S. ([article](#))
- Video: Moderna's chief medical officer on vaccinating kids, booster shots ([article](#))
- Dutch to reintroduce face masks as COVID-19 cases surge ([article](#))
- COVID-19 pandemic made hospitals more vulnerable to cyberattacks: security experts ([article](#))
- COVID-19 has killed 5 million people worldwide in under 2 years ([article](#))

- COVID-19 hospitalization can leave psychological impacts on patients, psychologist says ([article](#)) 2021 - Nov. 1, 2021
- WHO, partners seek more than \$23B US for new COVID-19 war chest ([article](#))
- WHO Weekly operational update on COVID-19 – 3 November 2021 ([report](#))

SMDHU Resources

Recent changes to SMDHU [website](#):

COVID-19 Vaccination

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

Stop The Spread

- Planning a Wedding Checklist ([link](#), [pdf](#))

Operating Your Business Safely/ Partners and Municipalities

Guidance documents

- Outdoor recreational amenities ([link](#))
- Organized Public Events & Gatherings ([link](#))
- Faith-based organizations ([link](#))

HealthSTATS:

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#). The COVID-19 HealthSTATS pages will not be updated on November 11.

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 - 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- SMDHU will be closed on Nov. 11 in observance of Remembrance Day.
- **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](#)