

COVID-19 Update for Partners

November 18, 2021

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Key Local Issues

Cases in Simcoe Muskoka continue to increase with local dashboard changing to “Red”

- Over the past three weeks we have seen a dramatic increase in confirmed cases (95% increase from the week of Oct. 24th to the week of Oct. 31st and a 33% increase from the week of Oct. 31st to the week of Nov. 7th). So far this week 195 cases have been reported with a high of 76 cases reported in one day (Nov. 17).
- The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) [COVID-19 Monitoring dashboard](#) overall status has moved to ‘Red’ for the first time since the start of the third wave; driven by changes in a number of indicators including increases in: average number of cases per week, new hospitalizations, effective reproduction number, number of outbreaks associated with outbreaks, testing percent positivity, and health system capacity usage (acute bed occupancy at ‘red’). Public health system capacity is also stretched.
- The rise in case numbers can be attributed to multiple outbreaks, increasing cases among those not yet eligible for vaccination (in particular children 5-11 years of age), and limited public health staffing to follow-up on clusters of cases. We are also seeing more community transmission, household transmission and vaccine breakthrough cases.

COVID-19 boosters and third doses available to eligible populations

- Additional populations are now eligible to receive a booster dose of vaccine six months following their second dose. Eligible populations include people 70+ years of age, Indigenous adults, and their non-Indigenous household members (16+), health care workers, designated essential caregivers in congregate settings, and people with two doses of AstraZeneca or one dose of Janssen.
- People who are eligible for a booster can find more information about how to get their vaccine at smdhu.org. Some clinics require appointments, while some are offering walk-ins as well.
- It is strongly recommended that people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised or receiving immunocompromising medications get a third dose of an mRNA vaccine. The third dose in this group is meant to complete the original series of COVID-19 vaccine to make it a three-dose series, due to evidence of potential waning immune response to the initial two doses and the increased risk of severe illness if they become infected with COVID-19.

- If you are [eligible for a third dose](#), contact your health care provider for a referral form or take your eligible immunosuppressing prescription directly to an immunization clinic.

Revisions being made to Letters of Instruction for businesses and organizations

- Due to increasing community transmission, the [Letter of Instruction to Businesses and Organizations](#) and the [Letter of Instruction to owners, operators, and persons responsible for any indoor facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities](#) are both being revised.
- Revisions to the Letter of Instruction to specific businesses and organizations will provide greater instruction around the active screening of members of the public, obtaining contact information and physical distancing in identified settings.
- The Letter of Instruction for [recreational and sports settings](#) (relating to proof of vaccination requirements) is being revised to include proof of vaccination for all individuals 12 years of age and older who are entering indoor facilities used for sport and recreational fitness activities.
- There is a [resource package](#) for businesses and organizations with COVID-19 cases that includes a checklist of steps to take to reduce further transmission and sample communications to help you inform your staff and/or patrons.

Self-isolation requirements change for individuals under 19 years of age

- The section 22 Class Order for self-isolation is being revised. The revision directs **unimmunized** youth under 19 years of age to quarantine/self-isolate when there is another unimmunized household member who has been identified as a close contact to an identified positive COVID-19 case. This means unimmunized youth under 19 years of age will have to self-isolate and get tested just like the close contact in their household.
- The purpose of this change is to decrease the number of asymptomatic school-aged children entering schools, which could cause more cohorts to be excluded and increase the risk of transmission at schools. The revision to the section 22 Class Order is being made in the context of the increasing number of COVID cases, the high proportion of cases in children under 12 years (20%) who are currently ineligible to be immunized, and of those school-aged children with COVID-19 with a known epi-link, ~50% likely acquired it at home (given household transmission risk is higher than many other settings).

Volunteering at a vaccination clinic

- We are currently accepting applications for volunteer support at our COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Stayner, Gravenhurst, Barrie, Bradford, and Alliston.
- For more information about volunteering at vaccinations clinics in **non-clinical** roles, review eligibility criteria and the application on our [website](#) or contact HR.COVID19volunteer@smdhu.org.

Safe holiday gatherings for workplaces

- As the holiday season approaches, we recognize the importance of traditions such as holiday gatherings.
- If you are considering in-person workplace holiday celebrations, please review the health unit's [COVID-19 guidance for organized public events and gatherings](#) for recommendations to decrease the risks associated with in-person gatherings of people who don't live together. You must also be mindful of current gathering limits, as well as physical distancing and mask/face covering requirements.

*Dr. Gardner's next media briefing will take place on **Wednesday, November 24, 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 Nov 18, 2021)*

Total Confirmed Cases	Active Cases <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	New cases Nov 7 - 13 <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	Total deaths <small>(# change from previous week)</small>	Current Hospitalizations <small>(# change from previous week)</small>	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated <small>(Target 90%)</small>
14,817	425 <small>(+12%)</small>	332 <small>(+33%)</small>	275 <small>(+6)</small>	23 <small>(+4)</small>	84%

- Of the 332 new cases reported last week, 66% were unvaccinated, 5% were partially vaccinated, and 30% were fully vaccinated.
- From September 19th to November 13th, the rate of COVID-19 infection among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible Simcoe Muskoka population is 8 times higher than it is for the fully vaccinated population and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations is 11 times higher.
- There are 23 active outbreaks (up from 18 last week), including 16 in educational settings.

More local data available at: [SMDHU COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and [COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#)

Local Media Updates *(Since Nov 12, 2021 Partner Update)*

- COVID-19 death toll on the rise and Simcoe Muskoka top doc's concern over kids ([article](#))
- SMDHU adds new safety measures as COVID-19 cases surge and death toll climbs ([article](#))
- Palliative care patient Diane Sims leads fight to vaccinate all health care workers ([article](#))
- 10 active school COVID-19 outbreaks in Simcoe County ([article](#))
- Health unit puts call-out for volunteers to help at vaccine clinics ([article](#))
- Gardner adding proof of vaccine for youth sports, stricter rules for churches ([article](#))
- 9 new COVID-19 cases and one new outbreak reported in Muskoka ([article](#))
- Midland COVID-19 assessment centre relocates ([article](#))
- Three emergency shelters in Barrie managing COVID outbreak as winter approaches ([article](#))
- Two Simcoe-Muskoka seniors succumb to COVID-19, while Barrie church outbreak grows to 31 cases ([article](#))
- UPDATE: 5 students test positive for COVID-19 at Utterson's V.K. Greer Memorial Public School ([article](#))
- 13 Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital staff on unpaid leave over COVID-19 vaccine policy ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka health unit set to announce local measures amid rising infections ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data

Ontario *(As of Nov 18, 2021)*

Total Cases	Active Cases <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	New cases Nov 4-11 <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	Total deaths <small>(change from previous week)</small>	Current Hospitalizations <small>(change from previous week)</small>	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* <small>(Target 90%)</small>
609,429	4,872 <small>(+11%)</small>	4181 <small>(-0.5%)</small>	9,955 <small>(+34)</small>	278 <small>(+71)</small>	86%

- Of the new cases this week, 48% are unvaccinated, 4% are partially vaccinated, 41% are fully vaccinated and 7% have an unknown vaccination status.
- In Ontario, unvaccinated individuals are six times more likely to catch COVID, 12 times more likely to be in hospital and 28 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: Algoma (176), Sudbury and District (117), Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (97), Haldimand-Norfolk (85), Windsor-Essex (77), and Simcoe Muskoka (69).

For more national data, see [Ontario COVID-19 case data](#), [Public Health Ontario Data Tool](#), [daily](#) and [weekly](#) epidemiologic summaries

Canada (as of Nov 17, 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
1,756,823	23,494 (-2%)	16,818 (-3.5%)	29,431 (+182)	85%

Weekly case highlights for October 31 – November 6 compared to the previous week:

- Canada reported moderate and no change in COVID-19 activity compared to the previous week.
- Increasing cases occurred in the Yukon, PEI, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario.

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

Global (as of 4:17 pm CET, 18 November 2021)		
Total confirmed cases	New Cases Nov 1-7 (% change from previous week)	Total Deaths (Change from previous week)
254,847,065	3,385,817 (+8%)	5,120,712 (+2%)

- During the week of November 8-14, the increasing trend in new global weekly cases continued, with over 3.3 million new cases reported.
- The Region of the Americas, European Region and Western Pacific Region all reported increases in new weekly cases, while other regions reported stable or declining trends.
- In the last week the highest number of cases were reported in: United States, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia, and Turkey.

For more international data, see: [WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#) and WHO weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - [9 November 2021](#)

Provincial, National and Global Media Updates (Since Nov. 12 Partner Update)

Provincial Updates

Ontario Government:

- Ontario enhancing COVID-19 Winter testing ([news release](#))
- Building on Ontario's plan to Keep Schools Safe and Open for In-Person Learning ([backgrounder](#))
- Ontario Supports Women in Post-COVID Economy ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario recently updated the following reports:

- COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Over Time - What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Hospitalizations and Deaths among COVID-19 Cases in Ontario: Waves 1, 2, 3 and 4 ([surveillance report](#))
- Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFIs) for COVID-19 in Ontario ([surveillance summary](#))
- COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Homes ([surveillance report](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage in Ontario by Neighbourhood Diversity and Material Deprivation ([surveillance report](#))

- SARS-CoV-2 Whole Genome Sequencing in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake and Program Impact in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Estimating the Prevalence and Growth of SARS-CoV-2 Variants in Ontario using Mutation Profiles ([surveillance report](#))
- Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 Following Vaccination in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- COVID-19 in Children, Education and Child Care Settings: Focus on October 17, 2021 to October 30, 2021 ([summary report](#))
- Myocarditis and Pericarditis after COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines ([focus report](#))

Other Provincial News:

- When public health tackles the major myths about vaccines and kids head on, it helps parents ([column](#))
- Person under 20 dies of COVID-19 in Ontario ([article](#))
- Ontario nears 6,000 COVID cases reported in schools since the start of the school year ([article](#))
- Front-line doctors fighting on two fronts: a deadly pandemic and digital harassment ([article](#))
- Ontario to let regions reintroduce measures: Ford ([article](#))
- Ontario to allow symptomatic COVID-19 testing inside pharmacies ([article](#))
- Public schools report highest weekend total of new COVID-19 cases since early October ([article](#))
- The battle against airborne COVID has shifted. Why your mask is the last layer of defence ([article](#))
- York Region's non-compliance team issues 7 charges at Aurora, Vaughan businesses ([article](#))
- St. Thomas, Ont., hospital overwhelmed with unvaccinated COVID-19 patients ([article](#))
- Some Ontario regions reinstate tougher COVID rules ([article](#))
- GO train, UP Express crews may not be vaccinated ([article](#))
- Vaccinations in Ontario's 12-year-olds still lag, suggesting a bumpy road ahead to get shots into even younger arms ([article](#))
- Ontario long-term care staff must have first COVID vaccine to attend work today ([article](#))
- Ontario assisting about a dozen long-term care homes as first-dose deadline hits ([article](#))
- More than 30 Sudbury school bus routes cancelled due to COVID-19 ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- Issued a statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, November 12, 2021 ([Statement](#))
- Will assist remote communities in Northern Ontario with COVID-19 response ([News release](#))
- Received submission from Moderna to authorize the use of the Spikevax COVID-19 vaccine in children 6 to 11 years of age ([Statement](#))

International Updates

- WHO Guidance on operational microplanning for COVID-19 vaccination ([link](#))
- WHO Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) weekly operational update ([link](#))
- WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 ([link](#))

SMDHU Resources

Recent changes to SMDHU [website](#):

COVID-19

- My COVID-19 test was positive, now what ([link](#))

Stop The Spread

- Gatherings, events and celebrating holidays ([link](#))

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- Third doses and boosters ([link](#))
- Walk-in schedules ([link](#))
- Proof of vaccination ([link](#))
- Learn from the experts ([link](#))
- Multilingual information ([link](#))

Going to School

- Families ([link](#))
 - There is a case/outbreak at my school or child care
 - My child has been identified as a close contact
- School administrators and educators ([link](#))

COVID-19 Assessment centres and testing

- Alliston ([link](#))

[Operating your Business Safely/Partners and Municipalities](#)

- Updated letters of instruction (changes described in introduction content)
- Guidance and resources for employers and workplaces experiencing COVID-19 cases ([link](#))
- Workplace holiday celebrations ([link](#))
- Organized public events and gatherings ([link](#))
- Outdoor recreational amenities ([link](#))
- Warming shelters ([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 - 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- **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](#)