

COVID-19 Update for Partners

November 25, 2021

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Local Issues

COVID-19 cases and related severe outcomes surge in Simcoe Muskoka

- Both the County of Simcoe and the District of Muskoka are seeing a drastic increase in confirmed cases. The last time our area experienced a similar number of weekly cases was in early May 2021, just after the peak of the third wave in April 2021. The incidence rate in Simcoe Muskoka has been higher than the province overall for the past five weeks and the difference between them continues to grow.
- Along with cases, COVID-19 related hospitalizations and deaths have increased, with more deaths in November than in September and October combined. Hospitalizations are highest among people who are unvaccinated and among vaccinated people over 60 years of age.
- This reinforces the importance of eligible people getting a [third dose or booster dose](#), particularly people who are immunocompromised and individuals 70+ who are more likely to experience waning immunity. It also highlights the need for those who have not been vaccinated to do so.
- One of the main drivers of this surge is outbreaks, with 19 currently ongoing outbreaks involving younger children, who have not previously been eligible to be vaccinated. Children 0-11 years of age have had the highest weekly incidence rate in Simcoe Muskoka since mid-September 2021. With the number of cases increasing, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) has prioritized follow-up investigations in schools and locations with children and youth, as capacity to follow-up with all outbreaks is not currently available.

Vaccination update: Children 5 to 11 years

- [Vaccinations for children 5-11](#) begins November 26. Locally there will be enough available appointments for every child 5 to 11 to get their first dose by mid-December to give them some protection for the holidays. The uptake of appointments for children 5 to 11 which opened this week has been excellent, with over 7,850 appointments already booked.
- Getting 5 to 11 year old children vaccinated is safe and the most effective way to protect them from COVID-19 (91% effective at preventing infection). Vaccination has the additional benefit of helping to safeguard against the disruptions to schooling and extra-curricular activities and the social isolation that children have experienced during the pandemic.
- Two doses of the vaccine are recommended, with at least eight weeks between the first and second doses. It is advised that children who are 5 to 11 years of age wait 14 days before or after receiving another vaccine before getting their COVID-19 vaccine.

- Parents and guardians can book COVID-19 vaccination appointments for 5 to 11 year old children through the province's [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900. Vaccines are also available at [participating pharmacies](#), the [Ontario GO-VAXX bus](#) and some primary care providers (call to see if yours if receiving vaccines to administer).
- Information for parents and caregivers about the vaccine is available on the health unit's [website](#).
- A live virtual Q & A session for parents about COVID-19 vaccinations for children is being held on Wednesday, December 8, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. A link will be posted on our webpage soon.

Vaccination update: Booster doses

- [Booster doses](#) are available for adults aged 70 and over (born in 1951 or earlier), health care workers and designated essential caregivers, people who received two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine, and First Nation, Métis and Inuit adults and their non-Indigenous household members who are 16 years of age or older.
- Booster doses appointments can be booked through the province [online](#), by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900, through the [Couchiching Ontario Health Team Clinic](#) (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) and at [Indigenous-led vaccination clinics](#). Booster doses are also available at [participating pharmacies](#), the [GOVAXX Bus](#) or through some primary care providers.

Revised letters of instruction

- In response to increasing community transmission of COVID-19 in Simcoe Muskoka, revisions have been made to two letters of instruction (LOI); one to [owners, operators, and persons responsible for indoor recreational sports and fitness activities](#) and another to [businesses and organizations](#) in the County of Simcoe, the District of Muskoka and the Cities of Orillia and Barrie.
- The LOI [to owners, operators, and persons responsible for indoor recreational sports and fitness activities](#) is effective at 12:01 a.m. Nov. 25. As of Dec. 8. all owners, operators, and persons responsible for any indoor areas of these facilities are to implement and enforce a policy that requires each person 12 years of age and older attending or being involved, in any capacity, in indoor organized sports and/or indoor recreational fitness activities to have identification and proof of having received at least one dose of a Health Canada approved COVID-19 vaccine for any entry. Participants aged 12 to 17 were previously exempt but will require identification and proof of a second dose, or a valid exemption as set out by the province, for entry after Feb. 16, 2022.
- Beginning on Jan. 1, 2022, children will have a 12-week grace period from their twelfth birthday to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations. This allows for a reasonable opportunity for children to complete their vaccinations and accommodate the current recommended eight-week interval between first and second doses. During this time, these individuals will be required to provide identification at the point of entry, but do not need to provide proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- The revised [LOI to businesses and organizations](#) goes into effect at 12:01 a.m. on Nov. 26 and applies to the same businesses and organizations as before, with the addition of indoor playground facilities, any organization or facility that provides indoor programming for children under 12 when programming is occurring and locations where religious services, rites or ceremonies take place.
- This LOI also provides further instruction on:
 - Active screening of members of the public, obtaining contact information and greater instruction on physical distancing for specific businesses and organizations.
 - Exemptions to physical distancing as noted in the regulation businesses and organizations including places that require proof of vaccination (POV) or may opt-in for POV.
 - Persons with COVID-19 symptoms, or who have been identified as a close contact, or who fail their active screening questions.
- A [resource package](#) is available to businesses and organizations with COVID-19 cases that includes a checklist of steps to reduce further transmission and sample communications to help inform staff and patrons.

Updated Section 22 – Order for self-isolation

- Our data show that the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in school-aged children is coming from transmission within their household or other community settings.
- To help slow the spread of COVID-19 in this age group, as of November 24, 2021, the health unit has implemented changes to its order for self-isolation. The updated Order requires people who are not fully vaccinated and are identified as a close contact to someone with COVID-19 follow these additional precautions:
 - Children 18 years and younger who are not fully vaccinated and live in the same house as a person identified as a close contact must follow the same isolation recommendations, and not leave their property unless it is to go for testing or to seek necessary medical attention. This includes not going to school, child-care, and other activities outside of the home.
 - Adults aged 19 years or older who are not fully vaccinated and live in the same house as a person identified as a close contact should stay home except for essential reasons* as long as they are not a close contact and there are no positive COVID-19 cases in the household.
**Essential reasons for leaving home include going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services, and/or attending school and for essential in-person work.*
- The changes do not apply to people who are fully vaccinated OR who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days.

Indoor and outdoor gatherings, activities and celebrating holidays

- With the holiday season beginning there is much anticipation of gathering and celebrating with family and friends. We urge you to continue to take precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission by following the tips outlined on our [website](#).

Outdoor organized public events (including parades, demonstrations, etc.)

- Although outdoor settings are safer than indoor ones, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is not eliminated. Those organizing events must ensure it doesn't provide the opportunity for the virus to spread. Participants can consider watching these events virtually. If you plan to attend any in-person outdoor organized public events you should:
 - Avoid crowds and maintain a 2-metre distance from others not from your household.
 - Wear a face covering if you are unable to maintain a 2-metre distance from people outside of your household.
 - If attending a drive-through type of event, wear a face covering if you are in a vehicle with people from different households.

Proof of vaccination and fraudulent certificates

- Since the implementation of vaccine certificates, there has been concern about the use of fraudulent certificates.
- The province's enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code was implemented to aid in providing a quicker more tamper proof system for both patrons and businesses. However, businesses that do not have the technology to scan QR codes can still ask for the original PDF vaccine paper copy along with ID to verify that the patron is vaccinated.
- Charges relating to POV, are offences punishable by set fines of \$750 for individuals and \$1,000 for corporations under Part I of the Provincial Offences Act (POA). Maximum penalties for this offence if prosecuted under Part III of the POA include a fine of up to \$100,000 and imprisonment for not more than one year for an individual and an individual who is an officer or director of a corporation can be fined up to \$500,000 and imprisoned for not more than one year. Corporations can receive a fine of up to \$10,000,000.
- To date there have been no charges reported in Simcoe Muskoka.

Previous SMDHU MOH media briefings are posted on the SMDHU [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel.

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Data (as of Nov 25, 2021)

Total Confirmed Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Nov 14-20 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (# change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (# change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated (Target 90%)
15,257	503 (+18%)	415 (+25%)	278 (+3)	28 (+5)	85%

- Of the 415 new cases reported last week, 58% were unvaccinated, 4% were partially vaccinated, and 38% were fully vaccinated.
- As of November 14th, the incidence rate for unvaccinated people was 170.5 cases (per 100,000 people) and 35.7 cases (per 100,000 people) for people who are fully vaccinated.
- From September 26th to November 20th, the rate of COVID-19 infection among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible Simcoe Muskoka population is 7 times higher than it is for the fully vaccinated population and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations is 12 times higher.
- There are 26 active outbreaks (up from 23 last week), including 21 in educational settings.

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

Local Media Updates (Since Nov 18, 2021 Partner Update)

- Thousands of Simcoe-Muskoka kids already booked for COVID vaccine ([article](#))
- Simcoe-Muskoka on pace to average 100 COVID-19 cases per day by early December ([article](#))
- Visitor restrictions back on at Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie ([article](#))
- Wasaga Beach staff, including mayor and firefighters, test positive for COVID-19 ([article](#))
- 'A dramatic increase' in COVID-19 cases prompts new safety rules for Simcoe-Muskoka sports, religious groups ([article](#))
- Local youth will need proof of COVID vaccine for sports facilities starting Dec. 8 ([article](#))
- COVID-19 outbreak on Beausoleil First Nation contained to 4 cases ([article](#))
- TIMELINE: Tracking COVID-19 cases in Muskoka schools for 2021-22 year ([article](#))
- Ont. doctor reassured that Health Canada took time to approve pediatric COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- Alliston's Stevenson Memorial Hospital reports nearly 100 per cent staff vaccination rate ([article](#))
- COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 5 to 11 to arrive in Simcoe Muskoka ([article](#))
- 'Please get tested': COVID case confirmed at Cultural Alliance gathering on Christian Island ([article](#))
- Midland health-care providers struggling to recruit and retain staff ([article](#))
- Man who had 1999 murder conviction overturned dies after contracting COVID ([article](#))
- COVID-19 significantly raises risk to pregnant women and their babies, new study finds ([article](#))
- Officials say hotel shelter model helps mitigate, manage COVID outbreak among homeless ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data

Ontario (As of Nov 25, 2021)					
Total Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Nov 19-25 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* (Target 90%)
614,270	5,552 (+14%)	4,841 (+16%)	9,985 (+30)	257 (-21)	86%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the new cases this week, 48% are unvaccinated, 3% are partially vaccinated, 42% are fully vaccinated and 6% have an unknown vaccination status. 					

- In Ontario, unvaccinated individuals are five times more likely to catch COVID, 14 times more likely to be hospitalized and 33 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 (224), Timiskaming (196), Sudbury and District (124), Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (103), Haldimand-Norfolk (99), and Simcoe Muskoka (93).

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

Canada (as of Nov 24, 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
1,774,946	23,939 (+2%)	18,141 (+8%)	29,580 (+149)	85.5%
Weekly case highlights for November 7-13, 2021, compared to the previous week:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Canada reported a 10% increase in the number cases reported in the last week and the average number of cases/week, a trend seen since early November.In the last week most provinces and territories reported an increase in the number of weekly cases except for Saskatchewan, which reported a decrease and British Columbia and Alberta who reported similar numbers to the previous week.British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan continue to have the highest incidence rates.				
For more national data, see: COVID-19 daily epidemiology update , Canada COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiology Report				
Global (as of 5:35 pm CET, 25 November 2021)				
Total confirmed cases	New Cases Nov 8-15 (% change from previous week)	Total Deaths (Change from previous week)		
258,830,438	3,779,369 (+11%)	5,174,646 (+8%)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Globally, weekly case incidence has continued to increase for more than one monthThe Region of the Americas, European Region and Western Pacific Region all reported increases in new weekly cases, while it is reported that Africa is reporting a significant surge in the current week.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 and Operational Updates				

Provincial, National and Global Updates *(Since Nov. 18 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

Ontario Government:

- Paediatric Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions ([Backgrounder](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccine Bookings to Open For All Children Aged Five to 11 ([news release](#))
- Ontario Ready to Begin Vaccinating Children aged 5 to 11 When Supply Arrives ([statement](#))

Public Health Ontario recently updated the following reports:

- COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Over Time - What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Review of “Evaluation of the BNT162b2 Covid-19 Vaccine in Children 5 to 11 Years of Age” ([synopsis](#))
- Community non-medical and medical mask use for reducing SARS-CoV-2 transmission ([evidence brief](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake and Program Impact in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFIs) for COVID-19 in Ontario: December 13, 2020 to November 14, 2021 ([surveillance summary](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage in Ontario by Neighbourhood Diversity and Material Deprivation: December 14, 2020 to October 24, 2021 ([surveillance report](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- Introduces legislation to create jobs and implement targeted COVID-19 support ([news release](#))
 - Types of Business Eligible for the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program ([backgrounder](#))
- Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (CCMOH): COVID-19 Vaccination in Children 5-11 years of age ([statement](#))([NACI statement](#))([NACI summary](#))
- Authorizes use of Comirnaty (the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine) in children 5 to 11 years of age ([Statement](#))
- Announces adjustments to Canada’s border and travel measures ([news release](#))([backgrounder](#))
- Issued a statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, November 19, 2021 ([statement](#))([remarks](#))
- Statistics Canada released results from survey on Access to Health Care and Pharmaceuticals During the Pandemic, March 2020 to May 2021 ([results](#))
- Information about COVID-19 at Dorchester Penitentiary ([news release](#))

International Updates

- WHO issues guidelines on the treatment of children with multisystem inflammatory syndrome associated with COVID-19 ([link](#))
- WHO released living guidance for clinical management of COVID-19 ([link](#))
- WHO and MPP announce the first transparent, global, non-exclusive licence for a COVID-19 technology ([link](#))
- WHO Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) weekly operational update ([link](#))

SMDHU Resources

Recent changes to SMDHU [website](#):

COVID-19 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](#))
- Class Orders and Letters of Instruction ([link](#))
- Class Order for Self-Isolation – Revised November 23, 2021 ([link](#))

Stop The Spread

- Gatherings, events and celebrating holidays ([link](#))
- Travel ([link](#))
- Planning a wedding during COVID-19 checklist ([link](#))

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- Children 5-11 years of age ([link](#)) and Getting the vaccine expender bar ([link](#))
- Third doses and boosters ([link](#))
- Pregnant and breastfeeding ([link](#))
- Walk-in schedule ([link](#))

Going to School

- Families ([link](#))
 - Someone in our school community has tested positive for COVID-19 ([link](#))
 - My child is a close contact ([link](#))
 - Instructions for household members ([link](#))
- School administrators and educators ([link](#))
 - Guidance documents ([link](#))
 - Staff or student is a close contact with someone with COVID-19 ([link](#))

COVID-19 Assessment centres and testing

- Midland ([link](#))

Operating your Business Safely/Partners and Municipalities

- Medical Officer of Health Letter of Instructions ([link](#))
 - letter to faith-based organizations ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Workplace safety plan, screening and proof of vaccination ([link](#))
- FAQ - Wearing masks or face coverings within enclosed public spaces - Step 3 ([link](#))
- Public Health Guidance for Facilities for Sports and Recreational Fitness Activities – Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Food Premises - Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Organized Public Events and Gatherings – Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Outdoor Recreational Amenities – Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Recreational Water Facilities - Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Retail Businesses and Shopping Malls – Step 3 ([link](#))
- The Public Health Guidance for Taxi and Rideshare Drivers ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations - Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Farmers’ Markets - Step 3 ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Food Banks and Donation Centres - Step 3 ([link](#))
- Public Health Guidance for use of Public Washrooms ([link](#))
- SMDHU COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Shelters ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Warming Centres – Step 3 ([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](#)