

COVID-19 Update for Partners

December 9, 2021

[Local Issues](#)

[Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Data](#)

[Local Media Updates](#)

[Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data](#)

[Provincial, National and International Updates](#)

[SMDHU Resources](#)

[Credible Sources of Information](#)

Local Issues

Omicron variant likely associated with household cluster in Simcoe County

- The health unit is investigating seven confirmed COVID-19 cases that have a strong probability of being the Omicron variant of concern. All the cases in the household cluster in Simcoe County are currently isolating at home. The cluster is linked to travel outside of Canada in late November.
- Although we are awaiting whole genomic sequencing of the samples, which should be available in the next 7 to 14 days, given the travel history and the preliminary laboratory screening results, the likelihood of an Omicron cluster is very high.
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's (SMDHU) case and contact management team is currently following up with each case and is providing instructions to identified close contacts regarding isolation and testing.
- While scientific data about the Omicron variant is still emerging, early evidence suggests that the variant may be more transmissible.
- I urge all residents to get vaccinated and those who are eligible to get a booster dose to do so, to remain vigilant about following public health measures, to monitor themselves/their children for symptoms of COVID-19 and to seek testing immediately if any should develop.

Vaccination Update

Number of deaths among the vaccinated

- The rate of COVID-19 deaths among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible (ages 12+) Simcoe Muskoka population is 6.5 times higher than it is for fully vaccinated population.
- Since July 18, 2021 to current (Wave 4), 25 people have died of COVID-19 in Simcoe Muskoka. Of those people who died, all occurred among those 35 years of age and older. Ten people between 35-64 years of age died, all of whom were unvaccinated, while 10 of 15 deaths in people 65 years of age and older were fully vaccinated. This reinforces the importance of those who are 50+ to get their booster dose as soon as possible.
- The mortality rate for unvaccinated 35- to 64-year-olds is 26 deaths/100,000 population, which is nearly 3 times lower than the mortality rate among those unvaccinated aged 65+.

Johnson & Johnson (also known as Janssen) (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine

- SMDHU now has access to the provincial supply of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine. Health care providers can refer patients to receive the J&J COVID-19 vaccine to the health unit with an [online referral form](#). The J&J COVID-19 vaccine is specifically for patients that are contraindicated to receive an mRNA vaccine and want to receive the J&J COVID-19 vaccine, or patients who decline receiving an mRNA

vaccine as the recommended vaccine and want to receive the J&J COVID-19 vaccine after informed consent.

- To ensure there is no vaccine wastage, the health unit will follow up with the clients directly to arrange for them to come to a central location to receive the vaccine.

Individuals 50+ eligible for COVID-19 booster dose

- Starting at 8 a.m. on December 13th, people aged 50 years and older will be eligible for their booster dose.
- Community clinics and the Barrie COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic are providing appointments to those eligible for third or booster dose. Appointments may be booked through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at [1-833-943-3900](tel:1-833-943-3900). Additional options for getting your booster dose include: [participating pharmacies](#), the [GOVAXX Bus](#) and through some primary care providers and family health teams.

Take-home rapid antigen screening kits for students during and after the holiday break

- To promote a safer return to the classroom after the holiday break, the Ministry of Education is working with local publicly funded school boards to provide take-home rapid antigen screening kits to all elementary and secondary students throughout Ontario before the holiday break. Additional take-home rapid antigen screening kits will be provided to elementary students only, through the five weeks after the break. The kits are being distributed to make it easier to track and prevent the spread of the virus by helping to identify asymptomatic cases.
- Use of the rapid antigen test kits is **voluntary** and using them is not required to attend class.

Province announces pause to lift capacity limits and vaccination certificate requirements

- I commend the province on making the recent difficult decisions related to the COVID-19 response, including pausing the lifting of capacity limits in remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required, and pausing the previously planned lifting of proof of vaccination requirements in January 2022.

Letters to residents, businesses, organizations and municipal CAOs

- We continue to see dramatic increases in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19. As such, on December 3rd, I issued an open letter to [businesses, organizations and residents](#) within the County of Simcoe, the District of Muskoka and the Cities of Orillia and Barrie, asking everyone to continue to follow public health measures to help reduce the upwards trend of COVID-19 in our area. A similar letter was also sent to the [Chief Administrative Officers](#) (CAOs) at each municipality.
- The letters are a reminder that everyone in the community has a role to play to protect each other from COVID-19, and to maintain and support our scarce health and public health resources.
- While we wish to avoid reducing capacity limits, if we cannot stabilize or reverse the increasing transmission rate in Simcoe Muskoka the health unit may consider reinstating capacity limits that were lifted by the province in October; a step which has already been taken by other health units.

Letter of Instruction to owners/operators of sports and/or indoor recreational fitness now in force

- The letter of instruction (LOI) released November 23rd to owners/operators of sports and/or indoor recreational fitness is now in force. Owners, operators, and persons responsible for any indoor areas of facilities used for organized sports and recreational fitness activities must implement and enforce a policy that requires each person, **12 years and older**, who attends an indoor area of the facility for the purpose of **attending or being involved, in any capacity, in indoor organized sports and/or indoor recreational fitness activities** to provide proof of vaccination at the point of entry. As of November 25th, 2021 coaches, teachers, instructors, volunteers, and officials are required to show proof of being fully vaccinated, while participants 12+ must show proof of at least one Health Canada approved vaccination by December 8th and show proof of being fully vaccinated by February 16th, 2022. Those participants turning 12 years of age in 2022 will be provided with 12 weeks from their 12th birthday to show full vaccination.

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Data (as of Dec 9, 2021)

Total Confirmed Cases	Active Cases <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	New cases Nov 28-Dec 4 <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>
16,409	710 <small>(+8%)</small>	588 <small>(+18%)</small>	280 <small>(+2)</small>	32 <small>(+1)</small>	85%

- From October 10th to December 4th, the rate of COVID-19 infection among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible Simcoe Muskoka population was 7 times higher than it is for the fully vaccinated population and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations was 15 times higher.
 - The incidence rate of COVID-19 infection for unvaccinated people is 1,279 cases (per 100,000 people) compared to 195 cases (per 100,000 people) for fully vaccinated people.
 - The rate of hospitalization for unvaccinated people is 78 cases (per 100,000 people) compared to 5 cases (per 100,000 people) for people who are fully vaccinated.
 - Of the 588 new cases reported last week, 58% were unvaccinated, 3% were partially vaccinated, and 39% were fully vaccinated.
 - There are currently 35 active outbreaks (up from 30 last week), including 29 in educational settings.
- More local data available at: [SMDHU COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and [COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#)

Local Media Updates (Since Dec 2, 2021, Partner Update)

- Omicron variant likely found within Simcoe County household COVID-19 cluster: Health unit ([article](#))
- Orillia Legion closed briefly after dart players tested positive for COVID-19 in November ([article](#))
- Barrie accounts for one-third of region's new COVID cases today ([article](#))
- How many staff at Muskoka school boards have received the COVID-19 vaccine? ([article](#))
- Sudbury Wolves cleared to resume games following COVID outbreak ([article](#))
- South Georgian Bay COVID-19 assessment centres to switch operator starting Dec. 9 ([article](#))
- Young adults, children make up majority of Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 cases ([article](#))
- At 33, Simcoe-Muskoka region tallies record number of COVID-19 outbreaks ([article](#))
- COVID-19 boosters now available at Muskoka community clinics for eligible individuals ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka health unit reports 31 outbreaks, 236 new cases over the weekend ([article](#))
- Parents upset over 'anti-vaxxers' targeting Barrie schools ([article](#))
- Q-and-A: Why are there more COVID-19 outbreaks in Simcoe County elementary schools than high schools? ([article](#))
- Muskoka-area health unit invites parents to live Q & A on COVID-19 vaccination for kids 5 to 11 ([article](#))
- UPDATE: COVID-19 outbreak ends at Utterson's V.K. Greer Memorial Public School ([article](#))
- BEYOND LOCAL: Eating disorders have increased during COVID-19 — here's how to recognize them and how to help ([article](#))
- Help usher in a safer holiday season, Muskoka health official tells communities ([article](#))
- In open letter, region's top doc doesn't rule out reinstating capacity limits to get COVID-19 rates stabilized or reversed ([article](#))
- 5,000+ Simcoe-Muskoka kids get COVID vaccine in first week of pediatric dose rollout ([article](#))
- 14 OSMH employees terminated with cause due to violating mandatory vaccination policy ([article](#))
- Is the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit on the cusp of becoming overwhelmed by COVID-19? ([opinion article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data

Ontario (As of Dec 9, 2021)

Total Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Dec 3 - 9 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* (Target 90%)
627,611	8,661 (+25%)	7,382 (+24%)	10,054 (+42)	309 (+18)	87%

- In Ontario, unvaccinated individuals are four times more likely to be infected with COVID, 14 times more likely to be hospitalized and 30 times more likely to be a patient in the intensive care unit compared with people who are vaccinated.
- The current rate of cases in unvaccinated people is 15.1 (per 100,000 people) more than double compared to those who are partially vaccinated 6.9 (per 100,000 people) and more than triple the rate compared to fully vaccinated people 4.4 (per 100,000 people)
- Of the 7,382 new cases in the past week, 45% are unvaccinated, 3% are partially vaccinated, 46% are fully vaccinated and 6% have an unknown vaccination status.
- Areas with the highest rate of active cases per 100,000 population are: Algoma (265), Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (196), Sudbury and District (173), Timiskaming (141), and Chatham Kent (132).

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

Canada (as of Dec 9, 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
1,823,009	31,295 (+18%)	24,147 (+15%)	29,876 (+139)	86%

Weekly case highlights for November 21-27, 2021:

- Compared to the previous week Canada reported a similar number of weekly cases.
- In the last week the jurisdictions reporting the highest increases in the number of weekly cases were Prince Edward Island (+50%), Newfoundland and Labrador (+50%), New Brunswick (+32%), Québec (+31%), and Ontario (+15%).
- Of the reporting jurisdictions, those with the highest incidence rate per 100,000 are Yukon (189), Manitoba (74), and Saskatchewan (69).

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

Global (as of 17:51 pm CET, Dec 9 2021)

Total confirmed cases	New Cases Nov 29 – Dec 5 (% change from previous week)	Total Deaths (Change from previous week)
267,184,623	4,204,500 (+5%)	5,277,327 (+1%)

Weekly highlights for November 29 – December 5

- Weekly case incidence was similar to the previous week. Of note, increases in new weekly cases were reported in the African Region (+79%) and the Region of the Americas (+21%).

- Weekly deaths increased by 10%, however significant increases in deaths were reported in the South-East Asia Region (+49%) and the Region of the Americas (+38%).
- The regions reporting the highest case incidence and incidence of death per 100,000 population were the European Region (288) and the Region of the Americas (91).
- In the last week the highest number of cases were reported in: United States, Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Russia.

For more international data, see: [WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#) and [WHO weekly epidemiological and Operational Updates](#)

Provincial, National and Global Updates (since Dec 2, 2021, Partner Update)

Provincial Updates

Ontario Government:

- Ontario Extending COVID-19 Paid Sick Days: Support for workers and employers will continue until July 31, 2022 ([news release](#))
- Ontario Extending Pause on Lifting Capacity Limits in Remaining Settings Where Proof of Vaccination is Required ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario recently updated the following reports:

- Updated: COVID-19 Variant of Concern Omicron (B.1.1.529): Risk Assessment ([evidence brief](#))

National Updates

Government of Canada:

- Government of Canada will require employees in all federally regulated workplaces to be vaccinated against COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Government of Canada signs agreements for COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments ([news release](#))
- Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (CCMOH): Update on the Use of COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters and on COVID-19 Vaccines and the Risk of Myocarditis and Pericarditis ([statement](#))
- Chief Public Health Officer on November 26, 2021 ([speech](#), [statement](#))
- StatsCan released Rural insights from the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy: October 25, 2020, to January 16, 2021 ([link](#))
- StatsCan released Impact of COVID-19 on non-profit organizations in Canada, fourth quarter of 2021 ([link](#))

International Updates

- WHO recommends against the use of convalescent plasma to treat COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Critical evidence to strengthen seasonal vaccination in the Americas ([link](#))
- #ACTogether campaign to promote access to COVID-19 tools during FIFA Arab Cup™ ([news release](#))
- Science in 5 episode #62: Polio and COVID-19 ([video](#))

SMDHU Resources

Recent changes to the SMDHU [website](#):

COVID-19 Main Page

- Special Statement and letter from Dr. Gardner ([link](#))
- Updated: Variants of concern ([link](#))

Stop the Spread

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

- Updated: Travel ([link](#))

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- Addition of Muskoka locations for booster doses ([link](#))
- Updated eligibility for booster doses ([link](#))
- Updated: Walk-in schedules for each area ([link](#))

Going to School

- Families ([link](#))
 - New: Student and Family Holiday Safety ([English/French](#))
- School administrators and educators
 - Resources for school staff and families ([link](#))

COVID-19 Assessment centres and testing

- Updated: Collingwood ([link](#))
- Updated: Wasaga Beach ([link](#))

Operating your Business Safely/Partners and Municipalities

- New: Open letter to local businesses, organizations, and residents ([link](#))
- New: Letter to municipal CAOs ([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](#)