

July 14, 2022

To Recreational Camp Operators:

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is reporting an increase in the rate of COVID-19 transmission and the beginning of a seventh wave in Simcoe Muskoka as demonstrated by rising case counts, active outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths, and through wastewater signals in some communities. This includes recreational camps where we already have seen six confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks declared in overnight camps in our jurisdiction since June 28, 2022.

The wave is being driven by the Omicron BA.5 subvariant, which is more transmissible than its BA.2 counterpart and is now the dominant strain in Ontario. Being previously infected by other COVID-19 strains unfortunately does not afford lasting protection against the BA.5 variant. SMDHU continues to strongly urge recreational camps to utilize the Ministry of Health's guidance document entitled [COVID-19 Safety Guidance: Camps \(revised March 1, 2022\)](#) as a best practices document to develop and implement specific protocols as needed.

With the increasing COVID-19 transmission, SMDHU is recommending the following prevention and control measures:

- Campers and staff attending overnight camp should limit their exposures to the greatest extent possible five days prior to arrival to camp.
- Campers and staff with symptoms should utilize the [provincial screening tool](#) and follow the direction provided.
  - Note that even though the screening tool directs those who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 to isolate for only 5 days, they are potentially contagious up to 10 days after symptom onset, and therefore the direction is to wear a mask from days 6 to 10 when unable to physically distance.
  - Symptomatic campers and/or staff should not come to camp until 10 days after their symptoms started, given that they are potentially contagious for up to 10 days (or 20 days for campers who are immunocompromised) and only then if symptoms are resolving.
  - Campers and/or staff who develop symptoms while at camp and are assessed as likely having COVID-19 should not remain at camp for their self-isolation unless they can be effectively self-isolated from others.
- Physical distancing should always be promoted, as much as possible, for campers and staff, between cohorts when indoors.
- Masks should be worn by all staff and campers indoors.
- Operate programs in cohorts (including staff members) who remain together throughout the duration of the program.

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If an outbreak is declared, camps will be asked to implement the following:

- Provision of written notification to the parents of all present and incoming campers regarding the outbreak.
- Physical distancing between cohorts outdoors as well as indoors.
- Staff and campers to wear masks indoors, and also outdoors when unable to maintain 2 metres distance from others.
- Singing, playing of wind/brass instruments and/or heavy exertion physical activities to be deferred.
- Staff providing care for suspect/confirmed COVID-19 cases (even if individual has no symptoms) to utilize [droplet/contact precautions](#).
- Close contacts of confirmed/probable COVID-19 cases (which would include at least the cases' cabin mates) are **to self-isolate for the same time frame as case** unless they meet one of the following criteria:
  - Previously tested positive for COVID-19 in last 90 days; OR
  - 18 years of age and older and boosted (3<sup>rd</sup> dose); OR
  - <18 years of age and are fully vaccinated.
- All close contacts (even if they do not have to self-isolate and even after the case has stopped isolating) are to wear well-fitted masks for a total of 10 days after their last exposure to the case as they may be incubating the illness. For activities when a mask cannot be worn (e.g., sleeping, swimming), close contacts should be physically distanced from others.

Further COVID-19 information is available on our website at <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/HealthUnit/Workplaces/Businesses/recreationalcamps/Control-of-Communicable-Diseases> and includes the following:

- [Respiratory Outbreak Checklist](#)
- [Respiratory Illness Line List Form - Campers and Staff](#)

To report increases in camper and/or staff illnesses, please contact the Infectious Diseases Team at 1-877-721-7520, extension 8809. Other questions about recreational camp operations can be directed to your local public health inspector or call 1-877-721-7520 and ask to speak to a public health inspector.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Dr. Colin Lee, Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

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