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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #32

Last Mile Strategy and Closing Mass Immunization Clinics, Third Doses for Specific Groups and Youth Turning 12 in 2021 Now Eligible

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Hospital CEOs, Hospital Laboratories, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse and Nurse Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Hospices, Coroners, Funeral Directors, Dentists, Group Homes, Homes for Special Care, Optometrists, Corrections, Municipalities, Licensed Child Care Providers

Date: August 18, 2021

Last Mile Strategy and Closing of Mass Immunization Clinics in Simcoe Muskoka

With COVID-19 vaccine coverage increasing and the demand for mass immunization clinics (MIC) decreasing, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is wrapping up MICs and shifting to more of an outreach approach to make vaccine as accessible as possible to those not yet vaccinated. The following groups remain lower in coverage:

- Younger age groups, with the highest priority being those under the age of 30
- Males between the ages of 18 and 39 years, with 18-29 being the highest priority
- The communities of Bradford-West Gwillumbury, Muskoka Lakes, Gravenhurst (particularly those 18 - 49 years of age), Clearview, Essa, Adjala-Tosorontio, Innisfil, Tiny, Ramara and Severn
- Lower socio-economic status neighborhoods and higher diversity neighborhoods
- Newcomers and recent immigrants
- Those with the following conditions: pregnant individuals, substance use disorders, and severe mental illness

Additional detail is available on the SMDHU [HealthSTATS](#) website.

While most MICs will be closed by August 27th, the COVID-19 Immunization Clinic at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie will remain open until September 29th. While appointments are available for this clinic through the [provincial appointment booking system](#), the clinic is also open for walk-ins during their hours of operation:

View all Public Health Alert bulletins at the Health Professionals Portal

www.smdhu.org/HPPortal



Subscribe to urgent health email communications (E.g. Public Health Alert) by registering at www.smdhu.org/PHAlert

- Sunday August 22 – Sunday September 5:
 - open 7 days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Monday September 6 – Wednesday September 29:
 - open Sundays 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Monday to Wednesdays from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

SMDHU has been reaching out to all people who have appointments booked beyond August 27th (September 29th for 29 Sperling Clinic appointments) to inform them clinics are closing and encouraging them to move their appointment up, take advantage of walk-in availability, visit a local pharmacy or contact their primary care provider. SMDHU has also emailed all of those with only one dose of COVID-19 vaccine documented in COVAX that have not booked a second dose appointment to encourage them to complete their series.

We encourage all primary care providers who have not yet onboarded to provide COVID-19 vaccine in their offices to please do so. Opportunistic vaccination opportunities will be an important part of our ongoing strategy to achieve the target of 90% coverage to protect our community. In addition to supporting remaining eligible vaccine hesitant patients, primary care providers will be an important partner for vulnerable groups as they become eligible for third doses and younger children when vaccine becomes available for this group. To start the onboarding process, please email vaccineorders@smdhu.org.

Third Doses for Specific Groups

The Chief Medical Officer of Health [announced](#) that the province will be proceeding with a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine for the following specific groups:

Eligible Group	Interval
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplant and hematopoietic stem cell transplants) • Patients with hematological cancers (examples include lymphoma, myeloma, leukemia) on active treatment (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy) for malignant hematologic disorders • Recipients of an anti-CD20 agent (e.g. rituximab, ocrelizumab, ofatumumab) 	Minimum of eight weeks following their second dose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents of high-risk congregate settings including long-term care homes, higher-risk licensed retirement homes* and First Nations elder care lodges 	Minimum of five months following their second dose.

*Note: we are currently awaiting a definition from the Ministry for “higher-risk licensed retirement homes”. We will follow up with eligible retirement homes once this information is received.

If the same vaccine that was provided for dose two is readily available it should be used for dose three, but vaccination should not be delayed, and whichever vaccine is readily available should be provided.

Transplant recipients, patients with hematological cancers on active treatments, and recipients of an anti-CD20 agent have a decreased immune response after COVID-19 vaccines compared to the general population, potentially increasing the risk of breakthrough cases for those who have already received two doses. A third dose will help to provide individuals in these groups with an improved immune response.

Third doses are not to be administered in health unit mass immunization clinics or local pharmacies. Hospital programs (i.e., cancer centers, transplant programs) will be reaching out to eligible patients to arrange for third doses. Primary care is also encouraged to reach out to their eligible patients, especially those who are not currently under the active care of a hospital program for their condition, to provide them their third dose if possible. The health unit is working with local hospitals to provide third doses to those who are under their care.

If a primary care provider is not providing COVID-19 vaccine in their practice, they will need to provide their eligible patients with a medical note that verifies their eligibility in accordance with the above criteria and they can be immunized at the 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie Immunization Clinic until September 29th. The provincial appointment booking system will not be able to accommodate third dose bookings, so people will need to present as a walk-in. Those presenting for third doses are encouraged to identify themselves to the screener who will accommodate them should there be a line up at that time. At this time, it is only these three specific conditions that are eligible for third doses. Public health is not able to make exceptions outside of this group.

Evidence shows that several months after receiving two COVID-19 vaccine doses, the immune response in residents who live in long-term care homes (LTCH) wanes significantly compared to the general population. Administering a third dose to residents of high-risk congregate settings including LTCHs, higher-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations elder care lodges, can help boost their immune response for improved protection against COVID-19. The health unit has been partnering with LTCHs and retirement homes to onboard their staff to COVAX so that they can provide ongoing COVID-19 immunization to residents. Public health will be reaching out to LTCHs, higher-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations Elder Care lodges to determine next steps for providing third doses to their residents. This will also include Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients in hospitals who have a destination of LTCH determined.

Youth Who Are 11 Turning 12 in 2021 Can Now Receive Their Vaccine

Based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, starting on Wednesday, August 18, 2021, the province is expanding eligibility for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to all youth who are turning 12 in 2021, based on the most currently available empirical evidence. Ontario has closely monitored data from Alberta and British Columbia where the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been offered to youth born in 2009 for several months with no risks identified. This will help to ensure even more students have the opportunity to receive the vaccine and ensure strong protection against COVID-19 and the Delta variant as they return to school. Youth can access COVID-19 vaccine through a mass immunization clinic including 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie clinic until September 29th, a pop up clinic in their community in the coming weeks, a local pharmacy or their primary care provider.

For immunization program information, support materials and forms refer to our website

www.smdhu.org/pcportal or call the Immunization program, Monday thru Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at 705-721-7520 or toll free 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8806.

Additional COVID-19 Vaccine Information

For more information about the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine in our area, please refer to the SMDHU [COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunization](#) webpages.

For more information on the province's three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan, please visit [COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario](#).

There are a number of COVID-19 resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at www.smdhu.org/hpportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).