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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #34

Third Dose Updates, Valid Exemptions and Building Vaccine Confidence

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 27, 2021

Third Dose Updates

The following is an update on the local implementation of 3rd doses as per the August 17th [provincial announcement about eligibility for third doses](#).

Those Eligible Based on Health Condition

Hospital programs and specialists have been reaching out to those eligible based on health condition (transplant recipients, hematological cancer patients receiving active treatment and those taking anti-CD20 agents) and making arrangements for vaccination. Those who are not receiving care from a hospital program or specialist at this time, should contact their primary care provider to inquire about vaccination.

If the primary care provider is not currently providing COVID-19 vaccine, they can complete the following [referral form](#) that will be uploaded to our website Monday August 30, 2021, which the patient can then take to their local pharmacy to receive their third dose. The client should receive the same vaccine that they received for their second dose if it is readily available, but the mRNA vaccines can be interchanged if needed for operational reasons. Those who received AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for their second dose can receive either mRNA vaccine for their third dose.

Residents of Long-Term Care Homes, Higher-Risk Retirement Homes and Elder Care Lodges

We are currently working with Long-term Care Homes (LTCHs), the Ministry identified eligible higher-risk retirement homes and elder care lodges to ensure vaccination of their residents by mid-September. This will ensure residents can then receive their annual flu vaccination as usual in mid-October with the recommended 28 days between receipt of COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines.



Those LTCHs who are already activated in COVAX can proceed with [ordering the vaccine](#) they require to provide third doses to all of their residents as soon as possible. Their vaccine will be delivered to the local health unit office for pick up as usual with other vaccines and will include the clinical supplies to administer the vaccine. We are currently in the process of contacting the remaining LTCHs, higher-risk retirement homes and elder care lodges to make arrangements to support the vaccination of their residents. Retirement homes will be able to have pharmacists come onsite to provide COVID-19 vaccine to their residents like last year's flu program as another option as well to assist with their planning. More details on this will follow.

Balancing Vaccine Wastage vs. Opportunistic Vaccination

As part of the current efforts to reach increased coverage targets in the province to protect individuals and the population, it is important to take every opportunity to vaccinate, especially for those who may be vaccine hesitant and for those who may be less likely to return for their vaccine, either first or second doses. Therefore, opening a vial to vaccinate one or a small number of individuals will be necessary to support vaccination efforts and reaching provincial targets. This is especially important where a vial is reaching its "must use by" date. Efforts should continue to be made in these instances to locate other potential individuals for vaccination (e.g., waitlists) wherever possible.

We continue to encourage all primary care providers to onboard with providing COVID-19 vaccine in their practice. Both Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are readily available and can be ordered through public health. With the anticipated added eligibility of children under 12 and more third dose groups anticipated to be added in the coming months, your patients will continue to look to primary care for vaccination.

Public health will support practices with onboarding to COVAX (the provincial documentation system for all COVID-19 vaccines in Ontario). While documentation at point of care is ideal, not every staff member in the office has to have access to COVAX as long as there is at least one staff member who can document the doses and manage the inventory in COVAX. We are here to support and make the process as easy as possible. If you have not yet signed on to provide COVID-19 vaccine and would like to do so, please email vaccineorders@smdhu.org.

To assist with reducing wastage and making **pre-filled syringes** of vaccine readily available, the health unit will have a dedicated day in each area that health care providers can pick up a small number of doses if needed to administer to their patients/clients/residents. This will start after Labour Day and we will be publishing a schedule soon on our website of what days this will be available at each local office.

Valid Exemptions

With the [CMOH announcement](#) last week directing the implementation of vaccination policies in mandatory high-risk settings, we have been getting questions about what valid medical exemptions to receiving COVID-19 vaccine would include. At this time, the health unit recommends the following as valid exemptions to receiving COVID-19 vaccine based on the contraindications and precautions listed in the [Canadian Immunization Guide](#) and supported by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI):

- History of severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) after previous administration of a COVID-19 vaccine or a known severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to a component of a COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals with a history of allergy not related to a component of authorized COVID-19

vaccines or other injectable therapy (e.g. foods, oral drugs, insect venom or environmental allergens) can receive COVID-19 vaccines without any special precautions.

- Those who developed myocarditis or pericarditis following the first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should not receive a second dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine until more information is available.

The following people should not receive the AstraZeneca /COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine, but can safely receive an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna):

- Those with history of venous or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia
- Those with history of capillary leak syndrome

NACI Recommendation for Those Who Received Non-Health Canada Authorized COVID-19 Vaccines

NACI released updated recommendations last week that those who plan on staying in Canada for longer periods of time (i.e., to live, work or study in Canada) and who have received one or two doses of a non-Health Canada authorized vaccine should be offered one additional dose of an mRNA vaccine soon after arrival in Canada.

This is currently under review by the Ministry of Health, and when we receive further communication on how this will be implemented in Ontario we will send that out. In the meantime the [current guidance for those immunized out of province](#) stands.

Helping to Build Vaccine Confidence in Those Not Yet Vaccinated – 4As Approach

Using a motivational interviewing approach to counselling aimed at exploring reasons for hesitancy can help increase vaccine confidence in those who are yet to be vaccinated. Adopted from the internationally recognized best practices for smoking cessation, these interventions can be performed by a health professional in less than three minutes. To support health care providers with implementing this approach, we have adapted resources developed by Hamilton Public Health Services based on the 4As approach (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist). Asking every patient about their vaccination status and discussing the importance of COVID-19 vaccination is a good way to ensure that all patients know you support vaccination.

In addition to health care providers, community partners can also play an important role in promoting COVID-19 vaccination in our community. A similar approach called the 2As approach can be used by community partners to simply “Ask and Assist” those in the community.

Please visit our website to review the [health care provider](#) and community partner tools ([general population](#) and for those working with [youth](#)).

COVID-19 Vaccination During Pregnancy - Updated Data Available

Better Outcomes Registry & Network (BORN) Ontario has recently published their second report on COVID-19 Vaccination During Pregnancy in Ontario which is now available on the BORN Ontario Website: <https://www.bornontario.ca/en/whats-happening/covid-19-vaccination-during-pregnancy-in-ontario.aspx>

- Cumulative incidence rates of pregnancy and birth outcomes among vaccinated individuals based on this preliminary data do not suggest any pattern of increased risk.

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](#).