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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #35

Third Doses for Residents of Long-Term Care Homes, High-Risk Licensed Retirement Homes and First Nations Elder Homes

Attention: Long Term Care Homes, High-Risk Retirement Homes, Rama Elder Care Facilities, LHIN

Date: September 2, 2021

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) continues to support long-term care homes (LTCHs), higher-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations elder care lodges move towards having all eligible residents receive their third dose of COVID-19 vaccine **before September 17, 2021**. Evidence shows that several months after receiving two COVID-19 vaccine doses, the immune response in residents who live in LTCHs wanes significantly compared to the general population. Administering a third dose to residents of high-risk congregate settings (long-term care homes, higher-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations elder care lodges) can help boost their immune response for improved protection against COVID-19. At this time, we are only authorized to offer third doses to residents.

Steps to Administering COVID-19 Vaccine at Your Facility

The process for onboarding to administer COVID-19 vaccine began in July and includes:

- Complete an assessment to rate the capacity to administer vaccine independent of SMDHU
- Complete and return by fax an External Partner Agreement
- Attend COVAX^{ON} training and have 1-3 staff members with active COVAX^{ON} accounts
- Complete a vaccine fridge inspection OR at least 4 weeks of in-range temperatures
- Review Ministry documents on Preparation and Administration of COVID-19 vaccines
- Learn Pfizer-BioNTech reconstitution process through this [video](#)
- Complete any training with staff necessary to administer the vaccine safely
- Identify any gaps and discuss supports available from SMDHU

If you have not completed all steps, please contact us to create a plan that can get vaccines into the arms of your residents before September 17, 2021.

Consent and Timing for Third Doses

Collect consent from substitute decision makers before your vaccine clinic day(s). The latest version of the [consent form](#) is dated August 17, 2021 but earlier versions may be used if consent has already been obtained. Residents who received their second dose on or before April 7, 2021, will be eligible for a third dose before



September 17th (5 months). Please contact us if you have not already received consent forms for your residents. Residents who can provide their own consent can do so directly in the COVAX^{ON} system with the immunizer at the time of vaccination.

The third dose of COVID-19 vaccine must be given 5 months after the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine and at least 14 days after any other vaccine. Second or first doses could be administered to anyone who requires a dose to complete their series during these clinics.

For those residents who are not eligible to be immunized before September 17, 2021 vaccine will be available for pick up from the local public health office on certain days where a SMDHU nurse will be drawing up vaccine. This vaccine will be a few doses in pre-drawn syringes. Please contact us to arrange this as needed after September 17th, 2021.

Vaccine Ordering

[Vaccine orders](#) are to be submitted by 3:00 p.m. on Thursday of each week for pick up at your local office the following week on Tuesday. Please submit your order as soon as you know the number of eligible residents. Both Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech are available to order. Moderna vials contain 14 doses and Pfizer-BioNTech (once reconstituted) will provide 6 doses per vial. Pooling of doses is possible with Pfizer-BioNTech so that an extra dose is obtained with every 3 vials ordered.

When picking up vaccine, ensure the cooler you bring is at 2-8°C and that cold chain is maintained in transport and at the site. Both vaccines are sensitive to light and movement. Please avoid unnecessary jostling or vibration of vials. Handle with care.

Supplies

SMDHU will provide all the supplies needed to prepare and administer the vaccine. You will receive (by doses ordered):

- Syringes for administration (and for Pfizer-BioNTech reconstitution)
- Needle tips
- Alcohol swabs
- Cotton wipes
- Bandages
- Sharps container(s)

Please ask for your supplies and plan to have extra space in your vehicle when you pick up your vaccines. Please contact us if you do not receive the correct supplies.

Vaccine Prepping and Administration

Please access the [COVID-19 Vaccine-Relevant Information and Planning Resources](#) page for the most up to date information.

Unpunctured vials of Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine can be stored safely in your fridge between 2-8 °C for up to one month. Twice-daily monitoring of your vaccine fridge is essential.

Moderna vaccine can be drawn straight out of the vials provided once thawed. Each vial should yield 14 x 0.5ml doses. Strict aseptic technique is required as the vaccine contains no preservatives. Once punctured, vaccine in

the vial or syringe is viable for 24 hours. Label any syringe that is not being used immediately with the product name, lot number and the date/time the syringe will expire (24 hours from date/time drawn).

This [video](#) is a good resource to learn how to consistently get 6 doses out of a Pfizer-BioNTech vial. Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will yield 6 dose per vial once reconstituted and is viable for 6 hours in the vial or a syringe. Label any syringe that will not be used immediately with product name, lot number and date/time syringe will expire (6 hours from time drawn up).

Any pooled doses will need to be documented in the COVAX^{ON} software platform. Any vaccine that is not administered to residents is considered a “wasted” dose and needs to be recorded in COVAX^{ON} within 24 hours of clinic completion. Please contact us if you need help reconciling your inventory at the end of your clinic.

Documentation

Any doses given to residents must be documented in the COVAX^{ON} software platform within 24 hours of administration. Please contact us to sign up for a training session if you have not attended one already. A COVAX^{ON} video is pending and will be available on our website shortly. Please ensure anyone who will be working in the system has an active account. For account activation, please contact us.

Vaccine Returns

Any partial vials or syringes that are not used should be recorded as wastage in COVAX^{ON} and discarded on site. Vials can be stored in your fridge of one month at 2-8 °C and can be used to immunize residents as they become eligible to receive their third dose. Any vaccine that is stored greater than one month and expires, can be returned to the closest SMDHU office using the vaccine return form.

Contact Information

For planning, COVAX activation/training, or general questions:

District of Muskoka Jen Cumming, PHN jennifer.cumming@smdhu.org
County of Simcoe Monica Bovett, PHN monica.bovett@smdhu.org

Vaccine orders/Supply pick up/COVAX inventory issues/questions:

District of Muskoka Teresa Szukalski teresa.szukalski@smdhu.org
County of Simcoe Maxine Holmes maxine.holmes@smdhu.org

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](#).