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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #51

12-17 Booster Eligibility, Vaccination Post-Infection, Continued Campaigns for Children Ages 5-11, Booster Doses and Local Clinic Updates

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: February 10, 2022

At this time two new recommendations have been made by [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI) and supported by the Ministry of Health (updated guidance posted [here](#)):

- A third dose booster for adolescents 12-17 years of age is strongly recommended to be offered at least three months after the completion of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series to those who have a higher risk of severe outcomes of COVID-19.
- A longer interval between COVID-19 infection and vaccination is suggested, since it may result in a better immune response and longer-lasting protection against Omicron and future variants. Risk factors for exposure and severe outcomes should be assessed when considering longer intervals.

Boosters for Adolescents 12-17

A booster dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is recommended by the Ministry of Health to be offered at least three months (84 days) after the completion of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series to adolescents 12-17 years of age who:

- Have an underlying medical condition that may put them at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19, including those with one or more of the following underlying health conditions, based on expert opinion and evolving evidence:
 - Immunocompromised individuals and those who have already received a three-dose primary series (for adolescents who are immunocompromised, a booster dose would be their fourth dose)
 - Cancer – active treatment
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic lung diseases, including uncontrolled asthma
 - Cystic fibrosis

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- Neurodevelopmental and other chronic neurological conditions including epilepsy and cerebrovascular disease
 - Diabetes (type 1 & 2)
 - Down syndrome
 - Congenital heart disease or other chronic heart diseases, including pulmonary hypertension
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Obesity (BMI ≥30)
 - Pregnancy
 - Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
 - Substance use disorders
 - Medically fragile/having medically complex needs
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals

Vaccines for this group are available at all Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) community clinics and can be received at pharmacies as well. Patients will self-attest to this booster request and no medical note or form is required at time of vaccination.

Vaccination Guidance Post-Infection

Individuals 12 years of age and older, infected with COVID-19 after their primary series but before their booster dose, are recommended by the Ministry of Health to receive their booster dose three months after symptom onset or positive test (if asymptomatic). As per NACI, emerging evidence indicates that a longer interval between SARS-CoV-2 infection and vaccination is associated with improved antibody responses to COVID-19 vaccines. With informed consent, individuals may receive a booster dose once they are asymptomatic and have completed their isolation.

Criteria are anticipated shortly for being considered infected with COVID-19, but in the interim can be interpreted to mean those who had a test-confirmed infection (PCR or RAT), or someone who was a symptomatic contact of a test confirmed case.

Priority: Children Ages 5-11 Dose 1

Provincial and local efforts are expanding this month to increase dose 1 (and 2) coverage amongst children ages 5-11. SMDHU currently has 49% dose 1 and 23% dose 2 coverage for this age group, slightly lower than the provincial average. At province-wide direction and following a successful local three-school pilot, SMDHU will be working with local school boards to plan school-based clinics in several communities over the coming weeks. This may include in-school hours with advanced parent/guardian consent, and/or after school hours open to the broader community. The final schedule and details will be communicated widely.

New communications efforts are also underway provincially and locally to provide parents with information they need to make a vaccination decision. Available resources include SMDHU's [5-11 webpage](#), a FAQ [video series](#) with local paediatricians Dr. Leah Bartlett and Dr. Asif Kazmi, a provincial campaign by the Children's Health Coalition at [parenthomework.ca](#), Ministry of Health materials at [COVID-19 vaccines for children and youth](#), and the Sick Kids [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#).

Priority: Booster Doses – 50+ and All Eligible

A certain degree of rebound in Omicron circulation is expected following the current relaxation of public health measures. Therefore, booster doses continue to be necessary for everyone eligible, with particular importance for those 50+ as they are at greatest risk for severe disease and hospitalization. For Omicron, studies continue to indicate that the booster dose is very important for increasing protection against infection, and for further increasing

and maintaining protection from severe disease. SMDHU will continue our booster dose efforts, including increased outreach through the month of February.

Clinic Location Updates

Clinic details and walk-in schedules are available on the health unit's [website](#) and social media accounts and include up-to-date information, including details about the SMDHU Collingwood community clinic moving to the Collingwood Legion at 490 Ontario St., effective Monday, February 7, 2022.

As demand for community clinic appointments and walk-ins decline, we are shifting some of our supports to outreach clinics. Some of these include working with our long term care homes, retirement homes, congregate settings, social housing and some schools across Simcoe and Muskoka.

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/hportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).