



ADVISORY

Fall 2023 COVID-19, Influenza, and Other Respiratory Viruses

September 28, 2023

As we enter fall, we are expecting to see a rise in community transmission of respiratory illnesses. This advisory has information to guide you in assisting patients to find services they need for the respiratory virus season.

Overall Key Messages

- Influenza and COVID-19 Vaccine will be **administered on the same schedule**. Influenza vaccines can be picked up between October 3 – October 13. COVID-19 XBB.1.5 vaccine is available to order from PPH. Please use the **COVID-19 Vaccine order form** and fax your order to 705-743-2897.
- New email notification system to send weekly COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Risk Index updates to those who sign up. Sign up can be found on Risk Index webpage: <https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/covid-19-risk-index/>
- New RSV vaccine has been approved by Health Canada for 60 yrs +. We are still awaiting formal Provincial guidance on a limited eligibility publicly-funded program in Ontario that will target Long Term Care and select seniors living facilities. Other residents 60+ could pay out-of-pocket if desired for the vaccine.

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Respiratory Virus Transmission Prevention Guidance for Patients

General Guidance During Respiratory Season:

For all members of the community at all respiratory risk levels, our guidance includes:

- Staying up to date with COVID-19 and Influenza vaccines

- Wearing a mask at elevated risk levels. This is a moderate risk level for those who are at high risk of complications related to a respiratory infection or high risk for the general public. N95 /KN95 masks that are properly fitted with a tight seal are recommended
- Stay home if you are sick
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene

COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Risk Index

Key Points:

- **Developed and maintained by Peterborough Public Health using local respiratory virus and COVID-19 data to indicate community transmission**
- **Provides information on risk of infection for community members and guidance recommendations at each level**
- **Located on [PPH webpage](#) and updated weekly on Wednesday at 5:00 p.m.**
- **New email notification system to send weekly risk index updates to those who sign up. Patients can find this on the risk index webpage: <https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/covid-19-risk-index/>**

The COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Index should be checked weekly on Wednesdays for information on local transmission. We are asking health care providers to advise their patients of this resource, particularly those who may be at an increased risk of severe symptoms, to ensure they understand current risk levels and preventative guidance.

COVID-19 Immunization Guidance

Key Points:

- **The XBB.1.5 is available for residents aged 6 months and older**
- **It is strongly recommended that those who are at a higher risk for COVID-19 complications receive a dose of the XBB.1.5 vaccine this fall**
- **Staying up-to-date: individuals 6 months and older are considered up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines if they have received a Fall 2023 COVID-19 dose.**
- **The XBB.1.5 vaccine is available to order from PPH. Please use the [COVID-19 Vaccine order form](#) and fax your order to 705-743-2897.**

Since peak circulation of both COVID-19 and influenza is expected in the fall during respiratory virus season, receiving both vaccinations will provide maximum protection. Co-administration of the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine is safe and effective at preventing severe illness.

On September 12, 2023, Health Canada announced the approval of Spikevax XBB.1.5-containing mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. Sub-lineages of XBB are continuing to circulate globally and around Canada and it is predicted that in the coming weeks it will become the dominant lineage group. The XBB.1.5 vaccine has been approved in individuals 6 months and older who have been previously vaccinated against COVID-19 as well as those who have not previously been vaccinated. This is the first vaccine to be approved as an additional dose in children aged 6 months to 5 years.

This fall it is recommended that all individuals aged 6 months and older receive a dose of the XBB.1.5 vaccine, if at least 6 months (168 days) has passed since their previous dose or confirmed COVID-19 infection. Those who are at [higher risk for complications related to a COVID-19 infection](#) are strongly advised to receive a booster dose with the XBB.1.5 formulation

The bivalent COVID-19 vaccine is still available for those who wish to receive it. While data has shown that the BA.4/5 formulation will generate an immune response against the XBB subvariants, the new XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine will provide a stronger immune response and greater protection this fall. Individuals who wish to receive the bivalent BA.4/5 should speak with their health care provider or local pharmacist who is administering the COVID-19 vaccine.

Influenza Immunization Guidance

Key Points:

- **Between October 3 - October 13, flu vaccine pre-allotments will be available for pick up Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm at 185 King St, 3rd Floor, Client Services. Vaccine orders do not need to be submitted for this initial allotment.**
- **New vaccine orders for the remainder of the season will be available for pick-up on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:45 am – 4:00 pm.**
- **For additional orders after the first allocation please use the [2023 -2024 Influenza Vaccine Order Form](#) and fax your order along with your vaccine fridge temperature log to (705)743-2897.**
- **Immediately report any fridge temperatures below 2°C or above 8°C by calling 705-743-1000 ext. 131 between 8:30 am to 4:30 pm or after hours leave a message at 705-760-8127 for on-call staff.**
- **For questions about the Universal Influenza Immunization Program call (705)743-1000 ext. 242**

Resources

In preparation for the 2023 -2024 influenza season, please review the following resources on the UIIP website found under 'Additional Resources and Information' at [Universal Influenza Immunization Program](#):

- NACI Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2023/2024;
- Canadian Immunization Guide section on early vaccine reactions including anaphylaxis;
- Public Health Ontario's Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFIs), which must be reported to public health;
- Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines which outlines the provincial requirements that must be followed by all healthcare providers who handle publicly funded vaccines;
- Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for the 2023/2024 Influenza Season;
- Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for Individuals 6 months to 64 years of age;
- Health Care Provider Qs &As: Information for Individuals \geq 65 years of age.

Peterborough Public Health's website will be updated with important information as it becomes available:

<https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/for-professionals/health-professionals/influenza/>.

Distribution and Pick-up

This season, each facility will be allocated approximately 50% of what was administered during the 2022/2023 influenza season as an initial amount. Between October 3 – October 13, flu vaccine will be available for pick up Monday – Friday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at 185 King St, 3rd floor, Client Services. Once you have received your first vaccine order, you may begin to place reorders beginning the week of October 10 for pick-up the week of October 16, pending supply from the Ministry of Health. For additional orders after the first allocation please use the [2023 -2024 Influenza Vaccine Order Form](#) and fax your order along with your vaccine fridge temperature log to (705)743-2897. New vaccine orders for the remainder of the season will be available for pick-up on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:45 am – 4:00 pm.

The temperature log should indicate temperatures within the range of 2°C to 8°C for at least seven days before vaccine will be released. If you cannot administer the vaccine within the next week, please arrange a later date for vaccine pick-up to reduce the risk of losing vaccine in a cold chain failure. Please ensure sufficient space is available in the monitored fridge to accommodate the vaccine order. Immediately report any fridge temperatures below 2°C or above 8°C by calling 705-743-1000 ext. 131 between 8:30 am to 4:30 pm or after hours leave a message at 705-760-8127 for on-call staff.

For vaccine pick up, a hard-sided cooler with a min/max thermometer is required. Please ensure that it is properly cooled before pick up to shorten your wait time. If you wish to borrow a cooler for your clinics this season, please contact Anita Watts at (705)743-1000 ext. 349.

Influenza Vaccine Products and Eligibility

The following table list the vaccine products and age eligibility available for the 2023 – 2024 season:

Age Group	QIV		QIV-HD	TIV-adj
	FluLaval Tetra	Fluzone® Quadrivalent	Fluzone® High Dose Quadrivalent	Fluad®
6 months to 64 years	✓	✓		
65 years or older	✓	✓	✓	✓

Fluzone® High-Dose Quadrivalent is a quadrivalent influenza vaccine authorized **only** for those **65 years of age and older**. Fluzone® Quadrivalent and Fluzone® High-Dose Quadrivalent are different products. **Please use caution when administering Fluzone® products to ensure that the right vaccine is being administered to the right person.**

Once again, the Fluzone® High-Dose Quadrivalent (QIV-HD) and Fluad® (TIV-adj) will be available for adults 65 years of age and older. The most important thing is for older adults to be vaccinated. Do not delay vaccination to wait for a particular product. NACI stated that any of the available age-appropriate influenza vaccines should be used. **There is no preferential recommendation for the use of QIV-HD versus TIV-adj for this age group.**

Co-Administration with other vaccines including COVID-19 vaccines

All available influenza vaccines (i.e., QIV-HD, TIV-adj, and QIV) may be given at the same time with other vaccines, or at any time before or after, other vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccine. Administration of COVID-19 vaccines may occur concurrently with (i.e., same day), or at any time before or after seasonal influenza immunization for those aged 6 months and older.

There are no direct studies on the co-administration of Shingrix with Fluad® (TIV-adj) or Fluzone® High-Dose Quadrivalent (QIV-HD). With Fluad®, it is unknown how the adjuvants may interact when Shingrix is co-administered. If given by injection at the same time, separate limbs should be used if possible. Alternatively, the injections may be administered into the same muscle separated by at least 2.5 cm (1”).

Influenza and Pneumococcal Immunization to High-Risk Groups

There is considerable overlap in the indications for the influenza and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine. Because of this overlap, the annual influenza immunization program presents an excellent opportunity to immunize eligible persons who have not yet received one dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine. The pneumococcal vaccine may be administered concurrently with influenza vaccine, but at a separate anatomic site. All residents of nursing homes, homes for the aged and chronic care facilities or wards are eligible to receive the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine as part of the high-risk program.

Vaccine Storage & Handling

The Ministry of Health’s [Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines \(gov.on.ca\)](https://www.gov.on.ca) states that vaccine cooler temperatures need to be tracked during clinics. Maximum, minimum and current temperatures should be recorded when leaving your

facility, after 1 hour of travel, when arriving at the clinic site, a minimum of every hour during clinic, at the clinic site before leaving, after 1 hour of travel, and finally, when arriving at your facility before putting vaccine back in the fridge.

COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccine Distribution Schedule

Vaccine Rollout for COVID-19 and Influenza

Month Vaccination Starts	Populations (Influenza)	Populations (COVID-19)
End of September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hospitalized individuals and hospital staff - LTCH & Elder Care Lodge residents, staff and care givers* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hospitalized individuals and hospital staff - LTCH & Elder Care Lodge residents, staff and care givers
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals at high risk for flu related complications or hospitalization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant individuals • Residents and staff of congregate living settings (e.g. chronic care facilities, retirement homes) • People ≥ 65 years of age • All children 6 months to 4 years of age • Individuals who are from a First Nation, Inuit or Métis community, and/or who self-identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, and their household members • Adults or children 6 months of age and over with chronic health conditions as follows (see table below) • Members of racialized and other equity deserving communities <p>*Update this year is the addition of essential caregivers in the first priority population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals at high risk for COVID-19 related complications or hospitalization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant individuals • Residents and staff of congregate living settings (e.g. chronic care facilities, retirement homes) • People ≥ 65 years of age • Individuals who are from a First Nation, Inuit or Métis community, and/or who self-identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, and their household members • Adults or children 6 months of age and over with chronic health conditions as follows (see table below) • Members of racialized and other equity deserving communities
November	- General population	- General Population

Vaccine Clinics

Key Points:

- **Influenza and COVID-19 clinic dates will be posted on our webpage at www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca.**

Influenza

The Ministry of Health recommends that health care providers not hold large scale clinics until November or until they have secured the vaccine necessary to operate these clinics. Peterborough Public Health is planning to hold one community clinic in Millbrook and will hold clinics from November through January for children under 2 years of age who do not have a primary care provider. Clinic dates will be posted at www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca. Pharmacies are able to administer flu vaccine to children age two years and older.

COVID-19

Throughout October and November, Peterborough Public Health will be holding community COVID-19 immunization clinics across the county and at our office. Residents who are eligible can book an appointment through the provincial vaccine booking centre call line at 1-833-943-3900 or online at [COVID-19 vaccines | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines). Many local pharmacies will be offering both COVID and influenza vaccine this season. To find a participating pharmacy, residents can visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines>.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine Information

Key points

- **RSV vaccine has been approved for use in Canada in adults 60+**
- **Formal guidance is expected soon from the province on administration and eligibility for a publicly funded program that will target adults 60+ in Long Term Care and select other seniors living facilities.**

The RSV vaccine, AREXVY, has been approved for use in Canada for the prevention of lower respiratory tract disease caused by RSV in adults over the age of 60. The Ministry of Health recently announced that the vaccine will be available for residents in long-term care homes, Elder Care Lodges, and for some residents in retirement homes. As this is a new vaccine product, it is recommended to wait 14 days between administering this vaccine and all other vaccines for safety surveillance and monitoring purposes to ensure potential adverse reactions can be attributed to the correct vaccine. At this time, public health units are awaiting further guidance from the Ministry, which will include the implementation plan for vaccine roll-out process, eligibility, and recommendations. Further information will be shared once available.

COVID-19 Testing

Key Points

- **RAT tests are available for FREE to anyone who is interested. Pick up at PPH office at 185 King St., Peterborough**
- **PCR testing is available for eligible residents**

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

Residents can be directed to get free RATs from Peterborough Public Health. The tests will be available for self-serve pick-up at our Client Services Desk, located on the 3rd floor of our office at 185 King Street, while supplies last.

Access to PCR Testing

PCR tests have a higher sensitivity than RATs and remain the gold standard for detecting COVID-19. PCR tests are recommended for specific populations at higher risk of severe outcomes and are available across the province. Eligibility

criteria for accessing publicly funded PCR testing can be found on the Ministry of Health's [COVID19 testing and treatment](#) webpage. Once eligibility is determined, this [tool](#) can be used to locate a nearby testing location.

Antiviral Treatment for COVID-19 and Influenza

Key Points:

- **Some residents are eligible for a Paxlovid prescription. Select Pharmacies in Peterborough region are also [prescribing Paxlovid](#).**
- **Some residents are eligible for influenza antiviral treatment and prevention. Additional information on recommendations can be found here:**
 - o [Influenza Antiviral Medication Fact Sheet - Quick Reference 2019 \(publichealthontario.ca\)](#)
 - o [Antiviral Medications for Seasonal Influenza: Public Health Considerations \(publichealthontario.ca\)](#)

COVID-19

Individuals that are at high risk of severe COVID-19 may be eligible to receive antiviral treatment to reduce the risk of serious illness and hospitalization. Eligible individuals must have tested positive through administration of a RAT or PCR test. Oral nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) is the preferred first-line treatment and must be prescribed within 5 days of symptom onset. IV remdesivir (Veklury) may be considered for individuals who are not able to take Paxlovid. The Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 antiviral treatment screener](#) can help residents determine their eligibility for Paxlovid.

Individuals who have a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis and meet at least one of the following criteria should be strongly considered for Paxlovid administration.

- 60 years of age or older;
- 18 years of age or older and immunocompromised;
- 18–59 years of age and is at higher risk of severe COVID-19. Patients at higher risk of severe COVID-19 include:
 - o Those who have one or more comorbidity that puts them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease OR
 - o Those with inadequate immunity, i.e.:
 - Unvaccinated or incomplete primary series OR
 - Completed primary series AND last COVID-19 vaccine dose was more than 6 months ago AND last SARS-CoV-2 infection was more than 6 months ago

A full list of pharmacies in the Peterborough Region prescribing and dispensing Paxlovid can be found [here](#).

Influenza

Neuraminidase inhibitors (i.e. Oseltamivir [Tamiflu®] and zanamivir [Relenza®]) are licensed in Canada for the prevention and treatment of seasonal influenza. These medications are well tolerated and may be effective when used for prevention (chemoprophylaxis) of seasonal influenza in certain circumstances.

Use for prevention

Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada (AMMI) recommends Tamiflu® and Relenza® use in long-term care/retirement home outbreaks (public health will be involved to support) and suggests use during community outbreaks of influenza for individuals at high-risk for complications in the following scenarios:

- During the 14-day period post-immunization (if vaccinated); OR
- When vaccination is contraindicated; OR
- When there is evidence of poor seasonal influenza vaccine effectiveness.

For persons at very high risk of complications, early presumptive treatment initiated as soon as possible after exposure to an infectious case (i.e., before symptoms begin), may be appropriate when influenza is prevalent; this strategy is preferred over post-exposure prophylaxis due to concerns regarding drug resistance.

Use for Treatment

AMMI recommends the use of influenza antivirals to treat adults and children with influenza-like illness (ILI) who:

- Are at higher risk of complications of influenza (65 years of age and older, pregnant women and women up to four weeks post-partum, and those with underlying medical conditions); OR
- Have severe, complicated, or progressive illness; OR
- Are hospitalized.

Influenza antiviral medications work best if administered within 48 hours of symptom onset (therefore do not wait for lab confirmation) and should be considered for the above at-risk individuals when influenza is known to be circulating in the community (as per Public Health Ontario's Respiratory Virus Tool or Peterborough Public Health)

Additional Resources

Dr. Piggott September 2023 Grand Round Recording – 2023 Respiratory Season Update: [Grand Rounds September 22 2023 Fall Public Health Update](#)

Upcoming event on October 3: PHO Rounds: Updates on Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV for the 2023-24 Season. More information and registration can be found at [PHO Rounds: Updates on Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV for the 2023-24 Season | Public Health Ontario](#)