



## **MEMO: Update on Regional Prioritization of COVID-19 Vaccine**

March 1, 2021

Huron Perth Public Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit, and Southwestern Public Health will provide regular updates on the eligibility criteria for recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine in their respective regions.

The Ministry of Health, through the guidance of the provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, prioritizes and directs the allocation of the vaccine. To ensure fairness across the province, local jurisdictions must adhere to the provincially determined sequence of recipients.

Periodically, vaccine supply differs by region and additional prioritization is necessary. In these instances, a regional **COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Advisory Committee** has been struck to help inform the public health units' decisions regarding further prioritization when necessary. For more information on the COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Advisory Committee, please visit the Middlesex-London Health Unit website at <https://www.healthunit.com/covid-19-vaccine-prioritization>. Eligibility will be reviewed weekly and will be dependent on vaccine supply and Provincial direction.

### **Current Provincial Direction on Prioritization**

The province has indicated that vaccine supply has improved and that eligibility for first-doses can be expanded. Given that long-term care home and high-risk retirement home residents have received a first dose of vaccine, first-dose vaccinations may be made available to the remainder of the Phase One populations. Specifically regarding health care workers, the province also released [Guidance for Prioritizing Health Care Workers for COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

### **Regional Update**

Short-term vaccine supply will continue to be less than the number of eligible recipients in the Phase One population. Therefore, further regional prioritization is required. The only product currently available in the region is the Pfizer-BioNtech COVID-19 vaccine.

When possible, Huron Perth Public Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit, and Southwestern Public Health will strongly consider age in determining the sequence of COVID-19 vaccine recipients. This is consistent with the province's ethical framework to guide COVID-19 vaccine prioritization and distribution decisions. The core principles include the objective of minimizing harms and maximizing benefits by reducing overall illness and death related to COVID-19. Amongst those infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, age is the single most predictive risk factor for death; in Ontario, [87% of COVID-19 associated deaths](#) have occurred in those over the age of 70. To reduce the number of deaths in the province, prioritizing the immunization of older individuals will be critical.

Eligibility criteria in the region are described below.

### **ELIGIBLE FOR BOOKING AN APPOINTMENT FOR A FIRST-DOSE**

The following people are eligible to receive the first dose of the vaccine. Where a health sector has been named in the priority sector, all frontline workers in that sector are included (e.g., including students, registered volunteers, custodial, security and reception staff). Where a non-health setting has been named, only workers providing a health service or direct patient care are included.

#### **Residents, staff, and essential caregivers associated with long-term care and retirement homes**

- Long-term care and retirement home residents.
- Long-term care and retirement home staff.
  - Includes LHIN, Hospital, Primary Care and Paramedic Services staff who are directly providing on-site support to LTCH and RHs in outbreak and have committed to a week or more of attending the facility.
- Essential caregivers in long-term care and retirement homes
  - A caregiver is a type of essential visitor who is designated by the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker and is visiting to provide direct care to the resident.
- Alternative level of care patients in hospitals who have a confirmed admission to LTCH, RH, or other congregate care home for seniors, as operationally feasible.

**Hospital and acute care health care workers in frontline roles with COVID-19 patients and/or with a high-risk of exposure to COVID-19. These individuals should be regularly scheduled staff (full time or part time) and not transient workers. The staff must be drawn from the following areas:**

- Critical Care Units
- Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Departments
- COVID-19 Medical Units
- Code Blue Teams and rapid response teams
- General internal medicine and other specialists involved in the direct care of COVID-19 positive patients

#### **Patient-facing health care workers involved in the COVID-19 response:**

- COVID-19 Assessment Centers, including Mobile Testing Teams
- COVID-19 vaccine clinics and mobile immunization teams
- COVID-19 Isolation Centers
- COVID-19 Laboratory Services

#### **Medical First Responders**

- ORNGE, paramedics, firefighters providing medical first response

**ELIGIBLE FOR BOOKING AN APPOINTMENT FOR A FIRST-DOSE - CONTINUED**

**Patient-facing community health care workers serving specialized populations including:**

- Needle exchange/syringe programs & supervised consumption and treatment services
- Aboriginal Health Access Centers, Indigenous Community Health Centers, Indigenous Interprofessional Primary Care Teams, and Indigenous Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics
- Community Health Centers serving disproportionately affected communities and/or communities experiencing highest burden of health, social and economic impacts from COVID-19
- Home and community care health care workers caring for recipients of chronic homecare and seniors in congregate living facilities or providing hands-on care to COVID-19 patients in the community.

**Frontline healthcare workers working in hospital inpatient settings and hospital procedural areas, including surgical care, anesthesia, obstetrics, endoscopy, operating rooms, dialysis, imaging, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. Other ambulatory and out-patient care areas are not included at this time.**

**Residents and staff in other congregate care settings for seniors, including assisted living facilities.**

**Adults 80 years of age and older.**

**Indigenous adults 55 years of age and older.**

- Eligible individuals must self-identify as Indigenous when presenting at clinic.

**Indigenous adults 16 years of age and older living on-reserve.**

- Eligible only at on-reserve clinics.

**ELIGIBLE FOR END-OF-DAY DOSES**

At the end of each clinic, there may be a small amount of additional vaccine available that is to be used to avoid wastage. Clinic operators should develop a plan for ensuring that the following groups are available for end-of-day doses.

**Any individual eligible for a first-dose who can present to the clinic within 30 minutes is eligible for end-of-day doses at a COVID-19 mass vaccination clinic or mobile clinic.**

## **SECOND-DOSE SCHEDULE**

Consistent with the provincial direction, to maximize the number of individuals benefiting from a first dose of Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine by delaying the second dose.

**Given the scarce vaccine supply, the Province has directed the following:**

- All second doses for residents of long-term care, retirement and First Nations elder care homes will be delivered at 21-27 days after their first dose.
- All second-doses for all other groups will be scheduled at 35 days after their first dose.

## **NOT CURRENTLY ELIGIBLE FOR FIRST-DOSE**

No other individuals are currently eligible for the vaccine in this region, including the following:

- Individuals with active respiratory symptoms.
- Healthcare workers not explicitly listed in the eligible groups.