

# COVID-19 Immunization Update

For Health Care Providers in Oxford County, Elgin County,  
and the City of St. Thomas



April 8, 2022

An Update from Dr. Ninh Tran, Acting Medical Officer of Health at Southwestern Public Health

## What You Need to Know This Week

### 1. BA.2 SUB-VARIANT

- The BA.2 sub-variant of Omicron is now the dominant circulating strain in Ontario. It is more transmissible than the previous BA.1 strain, with evidence suggesting no difference in severity.
- While less common, it is possible to be re-infected with BA.2 after having recovered from BA.1.

### 2. COVID-19 ANTIVIRAL ELIGIBILITY

- Treatment is currently recommended for adult individuals at a higher-risk of severe COVID-19 as determined by a clinician. This includes individuals who:
  - Are immunocompromised;
  - Are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or have not had a booster dose;
  - Have one or more risk factors, such as a long-term medical condition or of advanced age (70+)
- [Clinical Practice Guidance](#) for therapeutic management of adult patients for reference.

### 3. COVID-19 ANTIVIRAL REFERRAL PATHWAYS

- **Ontario-Wide:** The Ministry of Health and Ontario Health have updated the [list of locations](#) to access antiviral treatments and referring clinicians. This list may continue to be expanded.
- **Elgin/St. Thomas & Region:** [St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital](#) (519-631-2020 ext. 6210) beginning April 11, or [LHSC](#). (Carling Heights Assessment Centre – 656 Elizabeth Street, London).
- **Woodstock/Oxford:** COVID-19 clinical assessment to assess, test, and provide treatment options for outpatients who meet the criteria. Not all assessed patients will be prescribed Paxlovid. By appointment only, Monday to Friday 10AM to 4:30PM; Saturday and Sunday 10AM to 12:30PM. Call 1-855-905-6148 (Monday to Sunday, 8AM to 4PM).

#### 4. EXPANDED FOURTH DOSE ELIGIBILITY

- On April 7, [fourth dose COVID-19 vaccine eligibility](#) expanded in Ontario. Key points:
  - Ages 60 and older; and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis adults and their non-Indigenous household members aged 18 and older
  - Recommended 5-month interval (a minimum of 3 months) after the third dose. Advise waiting 3 months after a COVID-19 infection before accepting a booster.
  - **ACTION:** Share the “[Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines](#)” guide with patients.

#### 5. UPDATED COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC OPERATIONS

- Southwestern Public Health clinics currently operate on a first-come, first-served walk-in model. Clinics are very busy at the start and at the end of clinics – so please advise patience.
- Pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinics are paused from April 7-14. Clinics at Tillsonburg Community Centre on April 14 and 28, as well as GO-VAXX Bus clinics will continue as scheduled.
- **ACTION: Hours of operation at all clinics are subject to change;** direct patients to [www.swpublichealth.ca/covid19vaccine](http://www.swpublichealth.ca/covid19vaccine) for details.

#### 6. NOVAVAX ARRIVAL IMMINENT

- Interested patients can sign up to the local waitlist by calling 1-800-922-0096 ext. 9. Low German speaking individuals can leave a message by pressing 1 for the St. Thomas site, then 2. Novavax is the preferred 2<sup>nd</sup> option for individuals who cannot or do not want to receive an mRNA dose.

#### 7. REINFORCE PUBLIC HEALTH PRINCIPLES

- **ACTION:** Help reinforce the value of continued public health principles – such as masking, good hand hygiene, staying home when ill, and avoiding crowds – to prevent further community COVID-19 transmissions, particularly for vulnerable or immunocompromised patients.

#### 8. VACCINE CONSULT FOR PREGNANT AND BREASTFEEDING WOMEN

- SickKids has expanded its COVID-19 vaccine consult service to increase vaccine confidence in pregnant and breastfeeding women. [Learn more.](#)

#### 9. LOCAL VACCINATION RATES

- Data from the Ministry of Health as of April 6:
  - Percentage of SWPH 5+ population with at least one dose: 83.8%
  - Percentage of SWPH 5+ population with two doses: 81.4%
  - Percentage of SWPH 5-11 population with two doses: 29.4%
  - Percentage of SWPH 50+ population with three doses: 81.44%