

Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health



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

April 29, 2022

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

Colleagues,

Over the past two years, our health unit has communicated COVID-19 and vaccination updates via this e-newsletter to ensure you are aware of timely guidance and resources. As Southwestern Public Health brings programs back online, we are expanding the scope of this e-newsletter to keep you informed of additional public health information.

The cadence will adjust to be at least once per month, more often if content is time sensitive. Please consider sharing your feedback about our e-newsletters so that we can ensure they remain valuable ([link to survey](#)).

I look forward to continuing the collaborative healthcare work that Southwestern Public Health achieved with you throughout this pandemic. There is much to do, and we are grateful for your partnership and support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ninh Tran
Acting Medical Officer of Health

Southwestern Public Health
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Public Health: What You Need to Know

COVID-19 ANTIVIRALS

- On April 11, the Province [expanded access eligibility to COVID-19 antivirals](#) and PCR tests.
- Southwestern Public Health has received many calls from the community regarding access and eligibility for COVID-19 antivirals.
- **ACTION:** Due to the time-sensitive nature of this intervention ([source: NEJM](#)), please proactively inform patients in your roster who are eligible – particularly if eligible due to a medical condition - and provide directions for what they can do if they become symptomatic.

REMINDER FOR PARENTS

- **Parents of children receiving vaccinations in your offices must report the vaccinations to Southwestern Public Health.**
- Parents can [visit our website](#) to use the province's immunization reporting tool (ICON – Immunization Connect Ontario).
- Prompt reporting of vaccinations reduces the stress that results for families during Southwestern Public Health's immunization record reviews and school-based suspensions.

HIGH SCHOOL VACCINATION CATCH UP CLINICS

- In May, Southwestern Public Health will be visiting local high schools to offer catch up vaccination clinics for students who received a notice of an outstanding record or vaccination.
- A list of high school clinic dates can be found [here](#). Please direct secondary students to consider attending.

60+ ENCOURAGED TO SEEK 2nd BOOSTER (4th DOSE)

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [recommends a second booster dose of COVID-19 vaccines in Canada](#). The interval is recommended at 5 months after a third dose, at a minimum of 3 months between third and fourth doses.
- **ACTION:** Remind patients in your roster to be up to date with all COVID-19 vaccine doses they are eligible for. Visit www.swpublichealth.ca/covid19vaccine for a list of local vaccination clinics.

HEPATITIS B PROGRAM EXPANSION

- Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, students who missed one or both doses of hepatitis B vaccine in grade 7 will have until the end of grade 12 to complete their hepatitis B immunization series under Ontario's publicly funded program.
- As of September 2022, all students in grades 7- 12 will be eligible under this expansion.
- **ACTION:** Special release doses are available for primary care providers through Southwestern Public Health. Please use your [existing vaccination pathway](#) to order doses.

TDAP ELIGIBILITY IN EVERY PREGNANCY

- Beginning April 2022, Ontario has expanded its publicly funded Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis) immunization program to include a routine dose in every pregnancy, for protection against pertussis.
- [All pregnant individuals in Ontario](#) are now eligible to receive the vaccine for free in each pregnancy (ideally between 27 and 32 weeks gestation).
- Refer to the [NACI update on immunization in pregnancy with Tdap vaccine](#) for details.

LYME DISEASE REMINDER

- Southwestern Public Health is accepting ticks that have been removed from humans for identification only. The National Microbiological Lab is **no longer testing ticks** for Lyme disease surveillance.
- Only deer (blacklegged) ticks transmit Lyme disease, which is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*. However, other ticks can carry other tick-borne diseases.
- **ACTION:** In clinical assessments for Lyme disease, consider the patient's history of travel. Refer to the [2021 Lyme Disease Risk Map](#). **Oxford County and Elgin County contain tick risk areas.**
- **RESOURCES:**
 - [Quick reference guide for patient assessments](#) regarding diagnosis, treatment, and reporting of Lyme disease (Southwestern Public Health)
 - [Guidance for laboratory testing](#) (Public Health Ontario)