

Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health

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

March 31, 2023

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

Public Health: What You Need to Know

POST-DATED INCLUSION: TB

- Please refer to the [World TB Day information update](#), post-dated to March 2023 for resources for healthcare providers related to assessment and treatment of latent TB.

SURVEY: INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- Southwestern Public Health is looking to enhance knowledge and application of best practices of IPAC in the community.
- We are developing educational resources to assist physicians with their IPAC applications in medical practices.
- We will soon be reaching out to clinics in Oxford County, Elgin County, and the City of St. Thomas to gauge healthcare provider preferences for IPAC education and professional development.
- **SURVEY**: Please fill out this short survey. Responses will remain anonymous. [Click Here for Survey](#).

MPOX UPDATE

- The Ministry has issued [information for clinicians](#) about Mpox (formerly referred to as Monkeypox).
- Of note, there have been new cases of Mpox in Ontario since January 2023 with no clear epidemiological link.
- Clinicians are asked to keep Mpox on their differential diagnosis, have a low threshold to test in risk groups with compatible signs/symptoms, and continue to promote a two-dose vaccination series.

SYPHILIS UPDATE

- Syphilis is on the rise in the Southwestern Public Health region, with cases increasing from 4 managed in 2016 to 27 managed in 2022. A significant number of these have been infectious.
- Implications:
 - Several of the infectious cases tested through prenatal serology
 - Increase in congenital syphilis cases managed
 - Increase in females testing positive for syphilis, with a decrease in males testing positive, making predicting risk factors more difficult
- Case finding and early interventions are critical to preventing further spread.



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- **ACTION:** Healthcare providers are encouraged to test for syphilis for **all patients who are sexually active**, regardless of symptoms or partner status. For routine encounters, SWPH typically offers testing for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis C, hepatitis B (if not immunized), and HIV.
 - Ensure patients are being staged and treated for syphilis as per the [Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: Guides for health professionals](#) (formerly the Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections).
 - Also refer to the [Infectious Diseases Protocol Appendix for Syphilis](#).
 - Healthcare providers can [place an order](#) to pick up free treatment through the SWPH sexual health program.
- Southwestern Public Health is engaging in a project to help gear internal and community interventions to help prevent transmission, decrease rates of syphilis, increase testing, enhance early access to treatment, and promote effective management of syphilis in our communities. More information will be shared in the near future.

CHANGES TO LYME DISEASE TESTING

- As of April 1 2023, the PHO lab will be updating its testing algorithm for Lyme disease. Key highlights:
 - Modified two-tier testing (MTTT) approach replaces the former STTT algorithm.
 - In the MTTT method, initial screening continues to be performed by IgG/IgM ELISA and samples that are reactive or indeterminate will be further tested using a second ELISA.
 - This provides 15-25% higher sensitivity during early-localized disease, and comparable sensitivity during early-disseminated and late-disseminated disease compared to STTT.
 - Review the [clinical guidance document](#) for full details.
- Resources:
 - Public Health Ontario online Lyme disease resources, including risk areas ([link](#)).
 - Public Health Ontario Lab online Lyme disease investigation tool kit and test information sheet ([link](#)).
 - Contact Public Health Ontario Lab if any technical questions arise: customerservicecentre@oahpp.ca or 416-235-6556.

NO-COST SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

- A reminder that Southwestern Public Health offers prenatal classes, infant feeding support, postpartum mood disorder services, and referral-based home visits for at-risk families.
 - These are available to individuals preparing to welcome a child, and to those whose children are newborn until they begin school.
 - Because these services are provincially funded, your patients/clients can access these at no cost.
 - Visit www.swpublichealth.ca/knowandgrow for full details and referral forms.
- **MEET OUR TEAM:** Please watch this video to virtually meet members of our team who offer these services in the community. [Click here to watch](#).