

Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health



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

November 30, 2023

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

Public Health: What You Need to Know

RESPIRATORY UPDATES

GENERAL RESPIRATORY VIRUS UPDATE

- Provincially COVID-19 is still dominating respiratory activity.
- On November 29, SWPH was notified of one lab-confirmed case of Influenza A – the first of this season. [Click here](#) for details.
- RSV activity has been gradually increasing over the past 4 weeks but is still below expected levels for this time of year. There are 2 RSV outbreaks in SWPH in Long-term Care Homes/Retirement Homes.
- Refer to the SWPH Respiratory Virus Activity Dashboard for details: <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/en/shared-content/respiratory-virus-activity-dashboard.aspx>

COVID-19 VACCINATION CLINICS & FLU SHOTS AT SWPH

- COVID-19 vaccine appointments for December are now available to book at [Ontario.ca/book-vaccine](https://ontario.ca/book-vaccine).
- Flu shots will also be available during COVID-19 vaccine appointments at SWPH clinics in December.

ACTION: INFLUENZA VACCINE RETURN PROCESS

- Report all vaccine wastage. Any Influenza vaccine that is returned to your local public health unit is considered wasted and will not be re-used.
- To minimize vaccine wastage and ensure influenza vaccine availability for Ontarians, health care providers are encouraged to **maintain minimal stock** of influenza vaccine in cold chain to accommodate individuals who still are seeking influenza immunization between April and August.
- Please report all temperature excursions promptly to your local Public Health Unit to determine vaccine stability.

COVID-19 RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS

- The Ministry invites health care providers to order and provide rapid antigen tests (RATs) to their patients on a voluntary basis. Patients do not need to be screened for eligibility.
- Order through the PPE Supply Portal. To access or create an account, contact sco.supplies@supplyontario.ca.
- Providers not enrolled in PASP can order via <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/provincial-antigen-screening-program>.

Southwestern Public Health
www.swpublichealth.ca
1-800-922-0096



SECONDARY STUDENT RECORD REVIEW: SUSPENSION DATE IS DECEMBER 13

- Suspension notices (that will take effect Wednesday, December 13) have been issued to **several thousand students** in the SWPH region who remain overdue for vaccine under the Immunization of School Pupils Act legislation or who are missing vaccination records.
- **ACTION**: Please ask students/families in your roster to update their vaccine records online at www.swpublichealth.ca/vaccineswork.
- **ACTION**: If you are unable to provide vaccinations in your office, please communicate to students/families in your roster that SWPH offers clinics by appointment at www.swpublichealth.ca/immunizationbooking.

NOTICE OF TRANSITION FROM PEDIACEL TO PENTACEL IN 2024

- The Ministry of Health recently provided notice to Public Health Units that Sanofi Pasteur will no longer be continuing production of Pediacel vaccine and will be transitioning entirely to Pentacel.
- They assure us that both products are fully interchangeable; however, the presentation will be slightly different going forward.
- An implementation package and further information is expected in 2024 ahead of the transition.

NOTICE OF VACCINE ORDERING DOWNTIME OVER HOLIDAY BREAK

- **ACTION**: The final day in 2023 for vaccine pick up at both our St. Thomas and Woodstock locations will be Friday, December 22nd. Ordering will reopen again on Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024.

VACCINE STORAGE OVER HOLIDAY BREAK AT SWPH

- **ACTION**: If your office is planning an extended closure over the holiday season, please consider returning your vaccine supply to SWPH for safer storage to avoid adverse storage conditions (i.e., fridge failures, power outages, lack of monitoring of min/max temps, etc.).
 - Vaccine at SWPH locations is monitored 24/7 days a week.
 - To make arrangements, please reach out to Jaime Fletcher, jfletcher@swpublichealth.ca or 1-800-922-0096 ext. 1234, to discuss options.

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AWARENESS

- World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week (WAAW) is held annually November 18-24, and aims to improve understanding of this health threat and illustrate collaborative opportunities to prevent the emergence and transmission of AMR.
- Refer to [this resource from Public Health Ontario for reducing antibiotic overuse](#). The SWPH region is a lower use region.

SYPHILIS UPDATE: NEXT STEPS

- SWPH is completing a situational assessment that reviewed the evidence on the best ways to address the rise in syphilis cases. More information to follow once it is completed.
- **ACTION**: Attend the **SWPH virtual educational event for health care providers in early 2024 regarding syphilis management**. For more information about this event, pre-register here: ([link](#))