

Public Health Update from Southwestern Public Health



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

May 1, 2024

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

Public Health: What You Need to Know

RESPIRATORY DASHBOARD

- Regular updates to the seasonal respiratory dashboard have ended and will resume in fall 2024.

PHO IPAC RESOURCES

- Public Health Ontario has updated several of its IPAC resources:
 - [Recommended Steps: Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
 - [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings](#)
 - [Hand Hygiene](#)
 - [Routine Practices and Additional Precaution](#)

CANNABIS RESOURCES

- New resource: [Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines for Psychosis \(LRCUG-PSYCH\)](#) provides evidence-based recommendations for reducing psychosis-related risks when using cannabis.
- Website contains printable materials for patients, evidence brief, brochures, harm reduction posters, patient decision aid, and dialogue support tools for clinicians.
- Continue to use: [Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines \(LRCUG\)](#)

COVID-19 SPRING VACCINATIONS

- Individuals who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 may receive an additional dose of an XBB COVID-19 Vaccine in Spring 2024 (April to June) if it has been 6 months from the previous COVID-19 vaccine dose or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later). Eligible individuals include:
 - Adults 65 years of age and older
 - Adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors
 - Individuals 6 months of age or older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised (due to an underlying condition or treatment)
 - Adults 55 years of age and older who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis and their non-indigenous household members who are 55 years and older

Southwestern Public Health
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- Unimmunized individuals, or those children under 4 years who are completing an initial series, may receive a dose now. All other individuals are not currently recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine dose in Spring 2024 and should wait until further MOH recommendations. This includes individuals who are not at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 who did not receive an XBB COVID19 vaccine in Fall 2023, unless they are specifically recommended to receive a dose by their health care provider.
- Eligible Individuals aged 6 months and older may receive their COVID-19 vaccination from a participating pharmacist or primary care provider. A list of pharmacies offering COVID-19 vaccine can be found at [COVID-19 pharmacy vaccine locations](#). We encourage individuals to contact the pharmacy directly to ensure availability of COVID-19 vaccine and appointments, and to confirm any minimum age considerations at the pharmacy.
- **At this time, SWPH continues to offer limited COVID-19 appointments for eligible individuals between six months and 11 years of age only.** [Book online](#) or call 1-800-922-0096.
- For more information: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines>

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

- Social isolation and loneliness in our older adult population can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia, depression and functional decline.
- The United States Centres for Disease Control states loneliness and social isolation are associated with an increased risk of death of 26% and 29 %, respectively. This increased mortality risk is like smoking 15 cigarettes a day or having an alcohol use disorder, according to a meta-analysis covering decades of studies on the issue.
- The Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health has just released Clinical guidelines on social isolation and loneliness for older adults found here <https://ccsmh.ca/areas-of-focus/social-isolation-and-loneliness/health-care-professionals/>. They also have quick reference guides for key takeaways, assessments, and risk factors.
- Do you have older adult patients at risk? Refer them to one of our local seniors' centres or [A Friendly Voice](#) which they can call and talk to someone anytime of the day.

LOCAL DIETITIAN SUPPORTS

- There are many community dietitians providing free nutrition counselling services (individual and group programs) in our region. SWPH posts a listing of dietitians in Oxford County and Elgin St. Thomas on our website. Please note the organizations may have a certain catchment area or eligibility criteria.
- Dietitians serving Oxford County: <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/en/my-health/resources/Nutrition/Nutrition-Services-by-RDs-Woodstock-Oxford-2022.pdf>
- Dietitians serving Elgin St. Thomas: <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/en/my-health/resources/Nutrition/Nutrition-Services-by-RDs-Elgin-St.-Thomas-2022.pdf>

EVENT: CANADA'S GUIDANCE ON ALCOHOL AND HEALTH

- The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction is hosting a Roundtable on Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health and Ontario's Alcohol Policy.
- The hybrid event is a forum to join discussions on policy, labelling, and knowledge mobilization related to alcohol.
- [Register now](#) for the event in Toronto on May 8 and 9.