

COVID-19 Immunization Update

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



Week of March 29, 2021

An Update from Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health

Please share with staff as appropriate.

What You Need to Know this Week:

- On March 31, the following groups were added to the eligibility in our region:

Residents, Primary Essential Caregivers and Staff of High-Risk Congregate Living Settings

High-risk congregate living settings refer to residential facilities where a high-risk client population live or stay overnight and use shared spaces (e.g. common sleeping areas, shared bathrooms, shared kitchens, communal dining spaces). These settings are at higher risk of transmission, and include:

- Supportive housing
- Developmental services/intervenor including supported independent living
- Emergency homeless shelters
- Other homeless populations not in shelters
- Mental health and addictions congregate living
- Homes for special care
- Employer-provided living accommodations for temporary foreign agricultural workers
- Adult correctional facilities
- Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters
- Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) residences
- Children's residential facilities
- Youth justice facilities
- Indigenous healing and wellness
- Bail beds and Indigenous bail beds
- Provincial and demonstration schools/Consortium Centre Jules-Leger
- Inpatients on rehabilitation, complex care, geriatrics and mental health units

Adults 16 years of age and older with the following highest-risk health conditions:

- Organ transplant recipients
- Hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients

- Neurological diseases in which respiratory function may be compromised (e.g., motor neuron disease, myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis)
- Haematological malignancy diagnosed <1 year
- Kidney disease eGFR< 30

In addition, one (1) primary essential caregiver for an individual with an eligible highest-risk health conditions is now also eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

For both eligible cohorts above, primary essential caregivers are individuals who provide regular and sustained assistance with personal care and/or activities of daily living.

- Due to vaccine supply, the booking system used by both the Middlesex-London Health Unit and Southwestern Public Health currently requires a password-protected entry for those eligible due to highest-risk health condition. Southwestern Public Health has created a simplified registration process for health care providers to register **their practice** if they have any patients who fit the eligibility criteria. This process is [outlined in a health alert](#) distributed on April 1 through Rave Alert.
- On March 31, the Emergency Response Messenger System (ERMS) was replaced by the Rave Alert mass notification system. **Health care providers will no longer receive** COVID-19 vaccine eligibility notices via Rave Alert unless there is an immediate or urgent action required of them (e.g. registering). To continue to be notified of standard eligibility updates, subscribe to the following pages on the Southwestern Public Health website (found at the bottom of the pages):
 - [Advisories, Alerts, and Information Update for Health Care Providers](#)
 - [Regional COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Updates](#)
- Southwestern Public Health continues to receive shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines locally, with increased vaccine supply anticipated beginning next week. The AstraZeneca vaccine is also expected beginning next week for a small number of pre-selected pharmacy and primary care officers in our region.
- On March 24, [Health Canada updated the product monograph](#) for the AstraZeneca and COVIDSHIELD COVID-19 vaccines to provide information on very rare reports of blood clots associated with low levels of blood platelets following immunization with this vaccine. Health Canada also updated its online resources to include a [continued monitoring webpage](#) for ongoing updates.
- On March 29, [NACI published a rapid response](#) on the recommended use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in younger adults to include that this vaccine should not be used in adults under 55 years of age at this time while side effects are under investigation.
- The Province has notified all public health units regarding data where there are historically elevated infection rates and morbidity in specific neighbourhoods across the province. These 'hotspots' will soon be prioritized to vaccinate individuals aged 50 and older. We will communicate additional information once we have more details about whether this will affect neighbourhoods in our region.