

SOUTHWEST IPAC HUB

Fall 2025 Update

WHAT IS THE IPAC HUB?



The Southwest IPAC Hub is a collaboration between **Middlesex-London Health Unit**, the **Huron Perth Public Health** and **Southwestern Public Health**. We provide advice, guidance and direct supports to IPAC leads and those responsible for IPAC in congregate living settings including Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Group Homes, Shelters, Supportive Housing.



WHAT SERVICES DO WE PROVIDE?

The e-newsletter is distributed electronically to Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes and Congregate Living Settings in the Southwest IPAC Hub region.

Our team works collaboratively with partners to provide the following IPAC services and supports:

- ◆ Development of education and training programs and materials
- ◆ Supportive visits and consultations Assistance with IPAC self-assessments
- ◆ Coaching/mentoring on IPAC practices
- ◆ Outbreak management planning
- ◆ Communities of practice
- ◆ Best practice recommendations and implementation support

In this Issue

- Respiratory Season is coming, are you ready
- Environmental Cleaning – what level of clean and how often?
- Vaccine season is here
- Upcoming Webinars

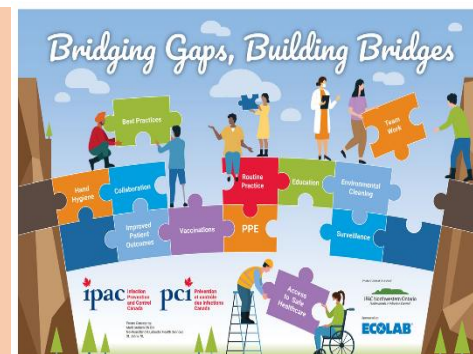
Important Dates

Upcoming IPAC Communities of Practice (CoP)

- ✓ **October 16 and December 11 at 11 am – 12 pm:** SWPH & MLHU CoP for **Other Congregate Settings**
- ✓ **October 27 and November 24 at 1 – 2 pm:** SWPH & MLHU CoP for **Long-Term Care & Retirement Homes**
- ✓ **November 7th and December 4th** HPPH CoP for **Other Congregate Settings**
- ✓ **November 12th December 10th** HPPH CoP for **Long-Term Care & Retirement Homes**

NATIONAL INFECTION CONTROL WEEK 2025 – October 20-24, 2025

This year's theme is **Bridging Gaps, Building Bridges**. It is a time to remind everyone about the importance of Infection Prevention and Control and a time to celebrate the work accomplished by each and every member of IPAC Canada. Thank you for your dedication and support in keeping your clients, residents and staff healthy!



Respiratory Season is Coming. Are You Ready?

Historically in Ontario, respiratory viruses circulate in the highest numbers from November to April and increased numbers of outbreaks are expected to occur during this time. It is the responsibility of a congregate living setting to be prepared for the possibility of an outbreak.

Resources to help you prepare:

[Ministry of Health's Seasonal Respiratory Pathogen Guide](#) (see section "Seasonal Respiratory Pathogen Guide")

[Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institutions and Congregate Living Settings, 2025](#) (see section "Reference documents")

For Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes:

[PHO IPAC Checklist for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes](#)

[PHO IPAC Self-Assessment Audit for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes](#)

For Other Congregate Living Settings:

[PHO Outbreak Preparedness, Prevention and Management in Congregate Living Settings](#)

[PHO IPAC Self-Assessment for Congregate Living Settings](#)

Respiratory Season Checklist: How Ready Are You?

Prepare early to build readiness and resilience within your facility so that when respiratory season comes, you will be ready to respond.

Check off all that apply within your organization to see how ready you are for respiratory season.

- ☐ Outbreak preparedness plan in place that is available, current, and familiar to staff
- ☐ Outbreak management policies and procedures in place that are available, current, and familiar to staff
- ☐ Infection prevention and control policies and procedures in place that are available, current, and familiar to staff
- ☐ Staff are up to date on infection prevention and control training, including hand hygiene, routine practices and additional precautions, point-of-care risk assessment, and appropriate selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- ☐ Staff have easy access to outbreak management resources and guidelines
- ☐ IPAC lead(s) are designated with back-up coverage, including for evenings and weekends
- ☐ Members of the outbreak management team (OMT) are identified

- ☐ Policy and procedure in place for communication with the local public health unit
- ☐ Local IPAC Hub identified and contact information is available
- ☐ Policy and procedure in place for communicating with staff, residents, family members, and visitors
- ☐ Policy and procedure in place for resident symptom screening and management of symptomatic residents
- ☐ Policy and procedure in place for staff screening and management of symptomatic staff, including a return-to-work policy
- ☐ Adequate supply of non-expired, appropriately stored, and easily accessible test collection kits, with a plan in place for delivery of specimens to the appropriate laboratory
- ☐ Adequate supply of non-expired and easily accessible personal protective equipment (PPE)
- ☐ Adequate supply of non-expired and easily accessible hand hygiene supplies
- ☐ Adequate supply of appropriate environmental cleaning supplies and disinfectants (with DIN)
- ☐ Outbreak signage available
- ☐ Policy and procedure in place for rapid deployment of treatment and prophylactic antivirals for residents, including ensuring eligibility assessments, consents, and prescriptions are completed in advance
- ☐ Policy and procedure in place for influenza antiviral prophylaxis for staff during an influenza outbreak
- ☐ Accurate record keeping maintained, including vaccination records for staff and residents
- ☐ Promotional and educational plan in place to encourage vaccine uptake for staff and residents

Now, tally up your items.

0 to 10 items complete: You're not ready...YET! You are not ready for respiratory season – yet! Keep going and you will be ready in no time.	10 to 20 items complete: On your way there! You are on your way to building readiness for respiratory season, but there is still more you could do to prepare.	21 items complete: Ready to go! You've done the work, and it shows! You are ready to respond to whatever may come your way this respiratory season.
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Environmental cleaning – What Level of Clean and How Often?

Within health care and communal living settings, there is always potential for surfaces and items to become contaminated with germs. Shared areas, surfaces and items require routine cleaning to keep everyone safe and healthy.

There are differing levels of cleaning based on setting determined by area within the facility and risks of exposures.

Hotel clean is an approach to environmental cleaning that requires removal of dirt and dust, waste disposal, and the cleaning of windows and surfaces. This includes public areas such as lobbies, offices, corridors, elevators and stairwells.

Health care clean level of cleaning reduces or eliminates microbial contamination within the environment. Health care clean has an increased frequency and thoroughness of cleaning, with the use of disinfectants at minimum daily. This includes all resident living areas, nursing stations, procedure rooms such as physiotherapy and washrooms. All facility washrooms are considered part of the health care clean component even if located outside of care areas.

How is Frequency of Cleaning Determined?

Surfaces and items at higher risk of transmitting microorganisms within the care setting should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently. When determining the appropriate frequency of cleaning and disinfection, the following principles apply:

- High-touch surfaces and items require more frequent cleaning and disinfection than low-touch surfaces and items.
- Surfaces and items in proximity to vulnerable client/patient/resident populations require more frequent cleaning and disinfection
- Heavily contaminated surfaces, items and equipment require more frequent cleaning than

moderately contaminated surfaces, items and equipment.

- Increase frequency of cleaning during outbreaks is required.

Appendix 21 of *PIDAC: Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections in All Healthcare Settings*, the risk stratification matrix outlines the probability of contamination with pathogens, vulnerability of population to environmental infection, and potential for exposure to guide the frequency of cleaning. Take a look to compare your facility's environmental cleaning policies and process. In times of outbreak, cleaning requirements increase.

Having A Process and Reviewing are Important

Health care facilities must have written procedures for cleaning and disinfection of care areas and equipment that include:

- defined responsibility for specific items and areas
- routine and discharge/transfer cleaning
- cleaning in construction/renovation areas
- cleaning and disinfecting areas under Additional Precautions
- outbreak management, and
- cleaning standards and frequency

Health care facilities must provide initial and continuing education for environmental service workers.

For more information:

[PIDAC: Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections | January 2018](#)

Vaccination Season is Here

As we move into the colder months, we also enter another respiratory illness season, a time when viruses like influenza and COVID-19 can spread more easily, especially in long-term care, retirement homes and other congregate living settings. Ensuring high uptake of seasonal vaccines is one of the most effective ways we can protect clients, residents, support staff, and lessen the burden on the health care system.



The flu, COVID-19 and RSV immunizations are available this fall, and it's important that we continue to encourage and support vaccination among clients, residents and staff.

Improving Vaccine Compliance

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals' attitudes toward vaccination may have changed. It's important to recognize that vaccine fatigue is real and after several years of ongoing campaigns, some staff and residents may feel overwhelmed, indifferent, or unsure about the need for another dose.

Here are some practical strategies homes can use to support higher vaccine uptake:

1. Provide Clear, Consistent Education

Offer short info sessions or printed materials explaining why vaccination remain important, especially in high-risk settings. Highlight how vaccine protection can wane over time and how seasonal strains evolve, reinforcing the need for up-to-date protection.

Education can serve as a gentle reminder of how effective and important these vaccines are in reducing illness and protecting the community.

2. Offer Incentives

When in doubt, offering a small incentive is an effective motivator to gain compliance. Creating a raffle prize for those who receive their seasonal vaccinations (e.g. gift card, candy) or creating a group goal (e.g. "If 80% of staff get vaccinated, the team earns a prize") is a great way to encourage shared participation.

For clients and residents, organizing a "Vaccine Day" event with music, treats, or themed activities can help make the experience more enjoyable and engaging.

A Shared Responsibility

Encouraging vaccination is about more than personal protection, it's about creating a safe and healthy environment for everyone. Together, we can help ensure this fall and winter season is safer for all who live and work in your home.

For more information regarding the seasonal vaccinations including availability and eligibility, please refer to:

- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/flu-facts>
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines>
- <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1006369/ontario-expanding-rsv-immunization-to-protect-more-seniors-this-fall>

UPCOMING WEBINARS

IPAC CANADA

Sustainability and Human Waste Management: A Review of the Science Behind the Claims (For IPAC Canada Members and Non-Members)

Date: Tuesday, October 21, 2025 1300 ET

Preregistered by Friday October 17, 2025

Please [click HERE](#) for more information.

Teaming for Safety (For IPAC Canada Members Only)

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2025 1330 ET

Preregistered by Friday October 27, 2025

Please [click HERE](#) for more information.

What can Go Wrong with Cleaning and Disinfection? (For IPAC Canada Members Only)

Date: Thursday, November 13, 2025 1330ET

Preregistered by Monday November 10, 2025

Please [click HERE](#) for more information.

From Genes to Germs: How bacterial gene expression impacts IPAC (For IPAC Canada Members Only)

Date: Thursday, November 27, 2025 1330 ET

Preregistered by Tuesday November 25th.

Please [click HERE](#) for more information

PUBLIC HEALTH ONTARIO

PHO Rounds: Legionella Risk Management and Investigations in Health Care Facilities

Date: Tuesday, October 21 at 12 - 1 pm

To register: www.eventbrite.ca/e/pho-rounds-legionella-risk-management-in-health-care-facilities-tickets...

NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NCCID)

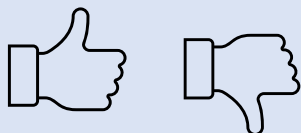
CAN AMS! : Turning the Tide on Resistance: Local Leaders, National Goals for Antimicrobial Stewardship.

Date: October 20 at 12 - 1 pm: To register:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_kQgiz2CcT5eGu4jNjX6ldQ#/registration

Respiratory virus immunization updates (2025-2026 season): <https://youtu.be/l6ampjZ9Zcs>

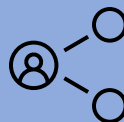
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on this newsletter](#)



Do you have a
service request?



Do you have an
IPAC story to share?



Do you have
general feedback or
suggestions?



Contact your local IPAC hub: [Huron Perth Public Health](#), [Middlesex London Health Unit](#) or [Southwestern Public Health](#)