



Lambton Public Health

Health Care Provider Newsletter and Update

From: Dr. Karalyn Dueck, Medical Officer of Health

Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023
Pages: 3
To: **Health Care Providers**
From: Dr. Dueck, Medical Officer of Health
Re: ***Immunization of School Pupils Act and School Suspensions, Travel Vaccines, Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS), COVID-19 Vaccine Ordering***

Immunization of School Pupils Act and School Suspensions

2024 will mark the first year since 2019 that the Immunization of School Pupils Act will be enforced in Sarnia-Lambton. To attend school in Ontario, the [*Immunization of School Pupils Act, 1990 \(ISPA\)*](#), requires students to be vaccinated against the following diseases or obtain a valid exemption: Tetanus, Diphtheria, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Pertussis, Meningococcal disease, Polio, and Varicella.

In anticipation of this, Lambton Public Health has been working to reduce the potential number of students impacted by suspensions, with notification letters to all overdue students and catch up vaccine clinics offered throughout Lambton County. There has been significant progress, however, over 6,000 students do not have reported up-to-date mandatory vaccines at this time.

The 2023-2024 school year suspension notification process will begin the first week of January, with a letter to parents/guardians/students notifying them of students' overdue vaccination status, which will include a list of the vaccines the student needs to receive or report, as well as instructions on how to report any vaccines received. A Suspension Order will follow at the end of January, for those who are still outstanding. Parents/guardians/students are asked to report vaccines already received to Lambton Public Health, or book an appointment with their health care provider or a public health community clinic. To prevent suspension, student vaccinations must be reported to Lambton Public Health before March 5th. Until proof of vaccination or exemption is received, the student will be suspended until records are submitted, up to 20 days.

Health care providers may see an uptick in patients requesting vaccines, due to the letters. Vaccines can be ordered online using Lambton Public Health's new digital vaccine order form: <https://lambtonpublichealth.ca/vaccine-order-form/>. Health care providers are able to order and administer school-based vaccines to patients, including hepatitis B (HB), human papillomavirus (HPV), and meningococcal conjugate quadrivalent (Men-C-ACYW-135) vaccines.

Lambton Public Health will be providing catch up vaccine clinics in December, January, and February 2024. More information about vaccine clinics, vaccine reporting, and the vaccine exemption process can be found at GetTheVaccine.ca

LambtonPublicHealth.ca/HCP

Your hub for up-to-date clinical guidance, resources, and forms.

Telephone: 519-383-8331
160 Exmouth Street
Point Edward, ON N7T 7Z6



[Healthcare
Professionals Website](#)



[Medical
Advisories](#)



[Newsletters](#)

Travel Vaccines

It is the season for travel. With an increase in travel, comes an increase in demand for travel vaccines. [The Public Health Agency of Canada website](#) provides lists of recommended vaccinations for specific travel destinations and other tips to protect health while travelling. Consultation on necessary travel vaccines can be accessed from local travel clinics: <https://lambtonpublichealth.ca/health-info/immunizations-vaccines/>. Please direct patients to travel clinics as needed, as Lambton Public Health does not provide travel vaccines at this time.

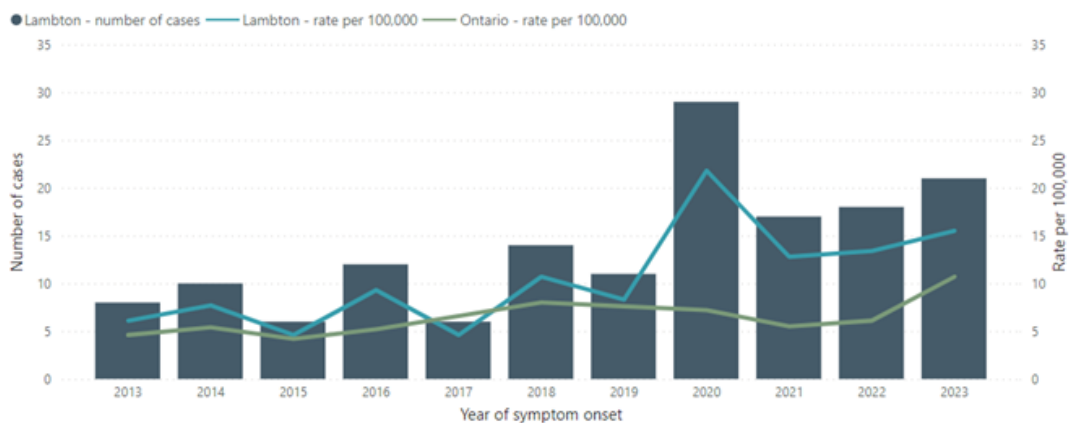
Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS)

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) disease is caused by bacteria that spread person-to-person through direct contact with nose and/or throat respiratory droplets, or via wound secretions. Some people carry the GAS bacteria in the throat or on the skin with no symptoms, or develop mild illness. In rare cases, GAS becomes “invasive”, when bacteria enter the blood or deep tissue. While iGAS remains relatively uncommon, it can progress quickly and may be associated with severe illness such as pneumonia, soft-tissue necrosis, sepsis, or other life-threatening conditions, which can result in death. Ontario has seen an increase in iGAS cases compared to pre-pandemic numbers.

Summary: Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease Trends in Lambton County
As of Nov 22, 2023

- There have been 21 confirmed cases of iGAS among Lambton County residents in 2023 to date. Though more cases may still be reported in 2023, this year’s case count is already higher than the count for 2022 (18, see Figure 1).
- No cases reported in 2023 have been among children under 15 years of age.
- Over the past 5 years (2018-2022), a median of 17 cases per year were reported among Lambton residents.
- Locally, the annual incidence rate per 100,000 for iGAS is increasing. Over the past 5 years, the local incidence rate has increased by 25% (from 10.7 per 100,000 in 2018 to 13.4 per 100,000 in 2022, see Figure 1).
- Over the past 5 years, the local incidence rate has generally been higher than the provincial incidence rate. In 2022, the local incidence rate was over two times higher than the provincial rate (13.4 cases per 100,000 in Lambton, compared to 6.1 cases per 100,000 in Ontario). Since data for 2023 is not yet complete, it is too early to compare rates for this year.

Figure 1: Annual number of confirmed iGAS cases in Lambton, and crude incidence rates for Lambton and Ontario, 2013 to 2023*



*2023 data is incomplete (extracted from iPHIS via PHO Infectious Diseases Query on November 22, 2023)

Testing: If iGAS is suspected, obtain appropriate specimens for routine bacterial culture or DNA detection by nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT). For more information about testing, requisitions, and kit ordering visit [Public Health Ontario's Streptococcus pyogenes \(Group A Streptococcal Disease or GAS\) – Typing Information](#).

Reporting: Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS) is an immediately reportable disease in Ontario. If you suspect or have laboratory confirmation of any reportable diseases of public health significance or their etiologic agents, report it to Lambton Public Health:
Call: 519-383-8331 or 1-800-667-1839
Fax: 519-383-7092

Recommended Actions:

- Promptly assess and treat non-invasive GAS as indicated, noting that GAS infections are generally considered non-contagious after 24 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment.
- Remind patients and parents/guardians on the signs and symptoms of serious bacterial infections, and when to seek urgent medical attention, particularly if at increased risk.
- Consult with an Infectious Disease Physician for the management of patients with suspected iGAS, as can progress quickly and is associated with life-threatening conditions.
- Promote up-to-date immunizations, particularly varicella and influenza immunizations.

Additional Information: For more information on iGAS treatment, reporting, and testing please refer to the [Ministry of Health Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability: Infectious Disease Protocol Appendix 1: Case Definitions and Disease Specific Information Disease: Group A Streptococcal Disease, invasive \(iGAS\)](#)

COVID-19 Vaccine Ordering

Health care providers and pharmacies are now able to order Novavax NUVAXOVID™ XBB.1.5 from Lambton Public Health. There may be a longer turnaround time for Novavax orders, as we do not plan to keep large quantities in stock. Pfizer COMIRNATY® Omicron XBB.1.5 - Pediatric is also now available to order.

Ordering vaccines and uploading vaccine temperature logs is now simpler than ever, with the newly launched digital vaccine order form. We invite you to visit <https://lambtonpublichealth.ca/hcp> to learn more.

For questions or support using the new forms and health care provider web pages, email healthcarepartners@county-lambton.on.ca or call **519-383-8331 ext. 3568** to speak with a member of our health care provider engagement team.

All children and individuals 6 months of age and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines in Canada. A dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is recommended 6 months after the previous dose or COVID-19 infection, with a shorter interval considered per patient factors as defined below.

As per Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), vaccination using shorter intervals (i.e., 3 months to < 6 months) following previous vaccination or infection has not been shown to pose a safety risk, though a shorter interval may produce less antibody response. **With increased levels of community transmission of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health recommends considering a 3 month interval for high-risk individuals**, including residents of long-term care and retirement homes. For low-risk populations, a 6 month interval is still appropriate. Full details at the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance Document](#).