

Date: September 4, 2024
Re: Seasonal Influenza Vaccines Opt-In RESPONSE REQUIRED; Infant and High-Risk Children RSV Prevention Program; High Risk Older Adult RSV Prevention Program; COVID-19 XBB Vaccine Market Withdrawal; New Outbreak Resources; SL-OHT Fall Respiratory Preparedness Webinar; Pertussis Increase in Ontario; PHAC's RRA for mpox; Talk Early Talk Often Sessions (Poster Attached)

Seasonal Influenza Vaccines Opt-In: RESPONSE REQUIRED

Lambton Public Health (LPH) receives a finite amount of influenza vaccine from Ontario's Ministry of Health to distribute to health care providers in the community. To allocate vaccines appropriately, we are asking health care providers to **OPT-IN** to receive influenza vaccine.

Please submit the influenza vaccine opt-in form by Friday, September 13th, 2024, via LPH's [online form](#) (preferred) or fax the completed (attached) form to 519-383-7092.

For questions, please contact Lambton Public Health at 519-383-8331.

As per Ontario Ministry of Health direction, all offices who opt-in will be allocated up to 50% of their total influenza vaccine doses administered last year in their initial allocation. Further communication on re-orders and an updated order form will be sent out in October. If planning larger clinics, please do not schedule these until November to ensure the vaccine is available.

Infant and High-Risk Children RSV Prevention Program

Ontario's Ministry of Health has announced for the 2024-25 RSV season, an expanded infant RSV prevention program. Please see the attached resources and visit Ontario's Ministry of Health [health care provider website](#) for more detailed information about the RSV vaccine program and eligibility criteria. This expanded program will involve transitioning from palivizumab (Synagis) to nirsevimab (Beyfortus), a monoclonal antibody against RSV, that provides effective and sustained protection with a single dose. Eligibility will include infants born in 2024 prior to RSV season, infants born during the 2024-25 RSV season, and infants eligible at high-risk of severe RSV up to 24 months of age, who are entering a second RSV season.

It is anticipated that newborns will receive Beyfortus during the 2024-25 RSV season after delivery before discharge. Beyfortus will also be made available for primary care providers and pediatric specialists for newborns eligible to access Beyfortus outside of a hospital setting, infants born in 2024 before RSV season, or infants eligible at high-risk of severe RSV. Beyfortus is expected to be available mid-October; LPH will inform providers when it is available to order.

Additionally, the RSVpre-F vaccine, Abrysvo, will be made available for pregnant individuals to protect newborns from RSV from birth until they are 6 months old. Per the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), the infant product Beyfortus is the recommended approach for RSV protection of infants, with Abrysvo vaccine available on a case-by-case basis in pregnancy. Abrysvo is now available to [order online](#) for eligible pregnant women, as determined by the health care provider with their patients.

High-Risk Older Adult RSV Prevention Program

Ontario's Ministry of Health will continue the high-risk older adult RSV vaccine program that was introduced in 2023, with expanded eligibility in 2024-25. The vaccine is indicated for adults ages 60 years and older and is currently publicly funded for high-risk individuals and settings.

RSV vaccine is now available to [order online](#) for eligible older adults. While two products will be available for this population this season (Arexvy and Abrysvo), LPH will be distributing Arexvy until it is depleted. Eligibility criteria and fact sheets can be found on Ontario's [Ministry of Health website](#). Note: individuals who received a dose of Arexvy last year are not eligible to receive another dose at this time, given evidence of multi-year protection.

People ages 60 years and older who do not qualify for free RSV vaccine can purchase the vaccine from their pharmacy with a prescription from their primary care provider.

COVID-19 XBB Vaccine Market Withdrawal

The Public Health Agency of Canada has issued a market withdrawal of all COVID-19 XBB vaccines in Canada, as of September 1, 2024. The COVID-19 XBB vaccines are being withdrawn as part of the regulatory process to authorize the approval of the new KP.2 Omicron variant COVID-19 vaccine formulations for the upcoming 2024 respiratory illness campaign.

LPH has contacted providers with COVID-19 vaccine inventory in COVax, with instructions for quarantine and wastage of all COVID-19 XBB vaccines. For sites that do not have this product on hand, no action is required.

As a result of the withdrawal process, COVID-19 vaccines will not be available between September 1, 2024 and receipt of the new COVID-19 vaccine formulation targeting the KP.2 Omicron variant (expected in late September, pending authorization and delivery schedules). Per the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and Ontario's Ministry of Health, please counsel patients that it is recommended to wait for the new COVID-19 vaccine formulation to provide greater protection against circulating COVID-19 strains.

New Outbreak Resources

Respiratory and gastroenteritis outbreaks in institutions are reportable to the Medical Officer of Health as stated in Ontario Regulation 559/91 under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

To support the work of health care professionals in prevention and management of institutional outbreaks, LPH has added a new section to the [LPH Health Care Professionals Portal](#). Resources provided include guidance and best practice documents, resources relating to both respiratory and enteric outbreaks, and signage for use during institutional outbreaks. LPH also provides an [Outbreak Status Report](#) with up-to-date information on outbreaks at local institutions and public hospitals.

To access these resources, visit LPH's Health Care Professionals Portal [Infectious Disease Prevention & Control](#) section under the 'Outbreaks' drop down.

SL OHT Fall Respiratory Preparedness Webinar

The Sarnia-Lambton Ontario Health Team (SL OHT) will be hosting a Fall Respiratory Preparedness Webinar on Monday, September 23 from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM.

In addition to updates from Bluewater Health and Ontario Health West Regional updates, this webinar will include important information from LPH regarding vaccines and IPAC Hub updates.

For more information, please see the attached poster from the SL OHT or [register here](#).

Pertussis Increase in Ontario

[Public Health Ontario \(PHO\) released an epidemiological summary of pertussis in Ontario from January 1 to June 30, 2024](#), noting a provincial increase in pertussis (whooping cough) during this period. LPH is alerting Lambton health care providers of two lab-confirmed cases of pertussis in children less than 24 months of age in the last two months, and recommends:

- Ensure all eligible patients are up-to-date on pertussis vaccines according to the [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario](#). Note, pertussis is a designated vaccine-preventable disease under Ontario's *Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)*.
- Consider pertussis in the differential diagnosis for respiratory illnesses, with [clinical presentation described by the Ministry of Health](#) (p. 4). [Test per PHO guidance](#).
- Report suspected or confirmed cases of pertussis to LPH at 519-383-8331.

PHAC mpox RRA

The [World Health Organization's \(WHO\)](#) Director-General determined on August 14, 2024, that the upsurge of mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and a growing number of countries in Africa constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR). As such, LPH is sharing the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) most recent rapid risk assessment (RRA) for mpox. Based on PHAC's current RRA, the likelihood of clade I mpox virus importation into Canada from the DRC through April to September 2024 was judged to be low to moderate. PHAC is updating the RRA to reflect the evolving clade I (clade Ia and Ib) mpox situation in Africa in the coming weeks which will be shared widely.

[Signs and symptoms of mpox](#) include fever, new rash/lesions in the mouth, genital, and/or peri-anal region, rectal pain, and lymphadenopathy. If suspecting mpox, [health care providers should follow PPE recommendations as per Public Health Ontario \(PHO\)](#), as well as [PHO's testing guidance for mpox](#), and call LPH for reporting and further directions.

Note that IMVAMUNE® vaccine is not a treatment for mpox and must be given before symptoms, as follows:

- **Pre-exposure prophylaxis** with 1st and 2nd doses of IMVAMUNE® vaccine doses at least 28 days apart are available **by appointment at LPH** for [eligible at-risk groups](#).
- **Post-exposure prophylaxis** with IMVAMUNE® vaccine is based on risk of exposure to mpox, with LPH consultation to assess risk of exposure and whether IMVAMUNE® vaccine is needed.

Talk Early Talk Often Sessions

LPH will be hosting two sessions for parents, guardians, and youth allies featuring keynote speaker Steve Keller of Drug Free Kids Canada. Topics include substance use trends and impact on youth brains, and how to start and maintain effective conversations with youth.

Health care professionals can share information about these events with patients using the attached poster.