

November 14, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are currently experiencing a challenging respiratory illness season. There are several viruses circulating in our community including COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza. We are seeing an increase in illness from RSV compared to previous years and influenza season began a month earlier than expected. The healthcare system is reporting an increase in severity of illness from these viruses, especially in children below 5 years of age.

Please use all layers of protection to keep Halton children and families safe from severe illness. These layers include:

Masking

- **Halton Region Public Health strongly recommends masking in all indoor settings including social and public gatherings.**
- Any individual above the age of 2 years, who is able to mask, should wear a good quality and well-fitted face mask in all indoor settings including schools and daycare.

Staying up to date with Flu and COVID-19 Vaccines including booster doses

- **Influenza (Flu) Vaccines**
 - **Individuals aged six months and older are recommended to receive their annual flu vaccine**
 - The flu vaccine is designed to protect against strains of the influenza virus that are circulating during influenza season. The vaccine stimulates the body's immune system to build antibodies against influenza, making it stronger and ready to fight off the illness before it starts. This year's vaccine appears to be a good match to the circulating strain of the virus.
 - Everyone can receive the flu vaccine at no cost by booking an appointment at their doctor's office, or a local pharmacy, or a walk-in clinic.
 - Children under 2 years of age must visit their doctor to receive the flu vaccine.
 - Flu vaccines do not provide protection against COVID-19 virus.
- **COVID-19 Vaccines**
 - **Individuals six months of age and older are recommended to receive their COVID-19 vaccine and recommended booster doses (aged five and older)**
 - We encourage parents and guardians to [book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment for their children](#), and to ensure that they, and other adult family members, are up to date with the COVID-19 vaccine and the recommended booster doses.

- Appointments for children under 12 are available on the upcoming November 25th school PD day.
- Visit halton.ca/COVIDvaccines to learn [where you can get your COVID-19 vaccine](#).

Additional protective measures include:

- **Screening daily** for symptoms and staying home if sick.
- **Practicing good hand hygiene.** Wash your hands frequently
- **Frequently cleaning high touch surfaces and objects** like shared toys, door knobs, and toilets
- **Practicing physical distancing where possible.**

Using all these layers of protection will help keep our children and families healthy and help protect our healthcare system. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to keep our community safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hamidah Meghani,
Medical Officer of Health