

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE #55 FROM HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH

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TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments, other Healthcare Providers

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: July 20, 2021

RE: COVID-19 Vaccine Update 55: Vaccination clinic walk-ins available, vaccine mixing safety, healthcare professional FAQs

QUICK FACTS

- As of Monday, July 19, Halton Region Public Health will accept walk-ins at the Gary Allan vaccination clinic, with possible expansion to further clinics.
- Comments made last week by a World Health Organization (WHO) scientist were taken out of context in the media – mRNA vaccine interchangeability continues to be supported, federally and provincially.
- Halton Region Public Health has created a list of frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine that healthcare professionals have been asking. Please see attached.

WALK-INS AVAILABLE AT VACCINATION CLINICS

- Please be advised that we will begin accepting walk-ins at our Gary Allan vaccination clinic in Burlington.
- Halton Region Public Health is issuing a formal request to primary care providers to contact patients they know are not yet vaccinated. They can now be directed to the new walk-in clinic availability.
- This will enable primary care providers to use code Q007 for reimbursement (which is applicable whether or not you administer the vaccine).

VACCINE MIXING SAFETY

- WHO scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan [was asked](#) by reporters last Monday if COVID-19 booster shots are necessary. In her reply she cautioned that countries need to focus on fully vaccinating the global population before discussing boosters or receiving three or four doses of multiple brands.
- She is quoted as saying "it is a bit of a dangerous trend" referring to the trend of receiving three or four doses, as scientists do not know yet if booster shots are necessary for additional protection, and this takes vaccines away from those who need it most.
- Unfortunately, the media used this quote out of context, with various headlines claiming mixing and matching vaccines is dangerous, according to the WHO.
- We know that mixing of mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna), as well as mixing AstraZeneca and an mRNA vaccine is safe, effective and enables more Ontarians to receive their second dose sooner.
- Ontario [continues](#) to follow the advice of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) which recommends that it is safe to mix these vaccines based on studies from the UK, Spain and Germany that have found that mixing vaccines is safe and produces a strong immune response.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Vaccination in Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Patient Decision-Making Tool](#)
- [Strategies to Support Ontarians' Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation for COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- [Building confidence in Moderna: A guide for primary care providers using the PrOTCT framework \(Centre for Effective Practice\)](#)

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE PROVIDE A COPY TO ALL PHYSICIANS IN YOUR OFFICE AND/OR POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES. IF YOU HAVE ANY ISSUES WITH THIS ATTACHMENT, PLEASE EMAIL DOCTORS@HALTON.CA.

Healthcare professional questions re COVID-19 vaccine (July 2021)

Are booster doses expected to be needed to improve the effectiveness of the vaccine?

- For both AstraZeneca and mRNA vaccines, two doses are required to complete the series. Currently, booster doses are not anticipated.
- Pfizer recently approached the US FDA for authorization of a booster dose, however, after analyzing the available data, both the US CDC and FDA [concluded](#) a booster shot is not needed at this time.
- Two doses provides good protection against current circulating variants, including the delta variant.
- The focus remains on increasing two-dose coverage in Canada, and vaccine coverage globally as the vast majority of the globe is not immunized, and remain at risk of severe disease.
- Should this change, Halton Region Public Health will let healthcare professionals know through a COVID-19 vaccine update.

Why are some Health Units using an 8-week interval for teens? Is there evidence that such a delay reduces the risk from myocarditis?

- Many health units initially used an 8-week interval for youth to allow for older adults to receive their second dose more quickly, while still working towards the provincial goal of having youth age 12-17 fully immunized before the start of the next school year.
- Most have updated their practice to align with new provincial direction that all persons 12 years of age and older are eligible for two doses at the 4-week interval.
- There is no evidence at this time that an extended interval decreases the likelihood of myocarditis or pericarditis following mRNA vaccines.

Have there been any serious myocarditis events in Ontario so far?

- In the most recent [update](#) from Public Health Ontario, 99 reports of myocarditis or pericarditis after receiving a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine have been received in Ontario.
- Of these, 60.6% of reports included a hospital admission, with a median length of stay of 2 days

Is there ever a role for antibody testing (e.g. to confirm immunity - patient reporting vaccine 'spilled' out of arm post-injection)?

- SARS-CoV-2 serology can have a role in [limited clinical scenarios](#), such as patients suspected to have multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) and other instances of severe illness and negative PCR testing, where results can help guide management
- There is [no known serological correlate of immunity](#), so post-immunization serology testing is not useful and [not recommended by NACI](#) outside of clinical trials.
- Patients can be reassured that receiving two doses provides good protection against severe COVID-19 disease, although public health measures continue to be recommended.

How can I safely reopen in-person office visits?

- The Ministry of Health has published [COVID-19 Operation Requirements: Health Sector Restart](#) to help guide in-person care
- The [OCFP](#) and [CPSO](#) have also provided some guidance to support office reopening

What are the vaccination rates in Halton, by individual communities?

- We can provide vaccination rates according to Forward Sortation Areas (FSA) in Halton – the first three letters and numbers in a postal code.
- These vaccine uptake areas should be interpreted with caution as we lack reliable population estimates for areas like L9E and L9T that have grown substantially since the last census.
- The vaccination rates according to FSA, as of July 7, are listed in the chart below.

FSA	% at least one dose	FSA	% at least one dose
LOP	68.2%	L7G	76.9%
L6H	75.7%	L7J	82.3%
L6J	75.8%	L7L	80.0%
L6K	74.2%	L7M	80.7%
L6L	77.3%	L7N	82.3%
L6M	76.4%	L7P	80.4%
L9E	85.6%	L7R	78.7%
L9T	76.6%	L7S	79.9%
		L7T	81.2%

Is there any general advice regarding asymptomatic rapid testing for physicians' offices and their staff?

- There is limited evidence to guide policy around asymptomatic rapid testing as a screening tool
- The Ministry of Long-term Care has recently [updated its requirements](#), so that staff and visitors are no longer required to undergo routine testing if they are fully vaccinated
- The COVID-19 Science Advisory Table has also published guidance [recommending against screen testing in vaccinated long-term care home staff](#)
- On balance, there is likely to limited value in asymptomatic screening at physician offices among vaccinated staff
- However, thorough symptom screening of staff and patients is important to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the office

Are there any updates about the likelihood of physicians being needed at the mass immunization clinics?

- While we had planned for a potential need for physicians in community immunization clinics in Halton Region over the summer, we no longer anticipate this to be a need.
- Instead, we encourage physicians to prepare to offer COVID-19 vaccines in their practices for when public health clinics close and for the eventual authorization of COVID-19 vaccines for children under the age of 12.
- Please email doctors@halton.ca to prepare your clinic for offering COVID-19 vaccines.

What is the landscape internationally for which vaccines are accepted and how vaccination influences travel eligibility/requirements?

- At this time, Travel Canada recommends against all non-essential international travel.
- Entry requirements and exemptions to quarantine will vary from country to country and may vary within countries, and for certain activities (e.g. large gatherings, organized events)
- Currently, Canada's exemption to quarantine is limited to people who are fully vaccinated with a Health Canada approved vaccine.
- Vaccination eligibility for people who have received vaccines outside of Ontario should be based on current Ontario [guidance](#) and not on a person's need to travel.