

## Ministry releases to PCPs details on this season's COVID-19 vaccine program

- Ontario will have [two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for the 2024-25 season](#) - Moderna and Pfizer - which both target the Omicron KP.2 variant. Moderna will be the available vaccine for children 6 months to 11 years of age. Moderna and Pfizer may be used for individuals 12 and up.
- The updated protein subunit COVID-19 vaccine, Novavax, will not be available in Ontario for the 2024-25 respiratory season.
- Individuals who are at increased risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection or severe illness due to COVID-19 should be prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as vaccine becomes available this fall. **Starting Oct. 28, 2024**, all other previously vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals (6 months of age and up) are recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine. Of note, people who provide essential community services are particularly recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine.
- Grey Bruce Public Health plans to begin distributing the updated vaccine formulation during the week of Oct. 7, 2024.**
- Doses will initially be distributed to local hospitals and congregate living settings to allow eligible staff and residents to be vaccinated. GBPH will also prioritize vaccinating high-risk and priority populations with initial supplies of vaccine.
- Primary Care Providers and pharmacies may begin placing orders for administration to priority populations right away, but cannot begin administering to the general population until Oct. 28, 2024.**

## Ontario records first domestically acquired case of human rabies since 1967

- The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a letter to Primary Care Providers on Sept. 6, 2024, after being alerted to a case of clinical rabies in Ontario.
- The case was exposed to a bat in Ontario and became progressively ill. They were later admitted to hospital with clinical signs of encephalitis and symptoms consistent with rabies; clinical diagnosis of rabies was confirmed by PCR analysis.
- The Brant County Health Unit issued the following media release: [Brant County Health Unit Confirms Rabies Case in Brantford-Brant Resident](#).
- When assessing a patient for rabies, health care providers must use the appropriate infection prevention and control measures to prevent rabies exposure from the saliva of their patient. **Clinicians must report suspected exposures of rabies to their local health unit, and discuss whether rabies prophylaxis is recommended by their local Medical Officer of Health, as part of their clinical decision-making.** There are currently rabies vaccines and immunoglobulin available in Ontario for post-exposure prophylaxis.
- Primary care providers have an important role in ensuring patients are aware that they should seek medical attention if they have had a bite or potential exposure. Patients should not try to assess for themselves whether they may need rabies prophylaxis, particularly related to bat exposure due to the high positivity in the bat population.

## Ontario's expands RSV prevention program for 2024-25 season

- RSV is a significant cause of respiratory illness in infants/young children. Nearly 4,000 children under age 2 were hospitalized for RSV in Ontario during the 2022-23 respiratory season.
- For the 2024-25 RSV season, the Ministry of Health will transition to an expanded infant RSV prevention program that will include all infants born in 2024 and/or during the 2024-25 RSV season and children under age 2 with specific high-risk medical conditions.
- This will involve transitioning from palivizumab (Synagis) to nirsevimab (Beyfortus), a monoclonal antibody that provides effective, sustained protection with one dose.
- Additionally, the RSVpre-F vaccine, Abrysvo, will be made available for pregnant individuals to protect newborns from RSV from birth until they are six months old. However, the infant product Beyfortus is the recommended approach for protection of infants per the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, with the vaccine in pregnancy being available only on a case-by-case basis.
- The administration of Beyfortus and Abrysvo will require multiple channels to reach eligible populations effectively. This includes hospital administration of Beyfortus to newborns during RSV season before discharge, ensuring immediate protection for in-season births. Primary care providers and public health units will play a key role in administering the prophylaxis for out-of-season infants or those born outside the hospital system (e.g., home births). Additionally, pediatric specialists, primary care providers, and outpatient hospital clinics will be important in reaching infants up to age 2 who are at high risk for severe RSV disease during their second season.
- RSV resources for healthcare professionals:
  - [RSV Fact Sheet](#)
  - [Infant RSV Guidance for Health Care Providers – Beyfortus](#)
  - [Beyfortus Fact Sheet](#)
  - [Infant RSV Guidance for Health Care Providers – Abrysvo](#)
  - [Abrysvo in Pregnancy Fact Sheet](#)

## Increased alcohol availability and alcohol-related harms

- In 2024, the Provincial government announced the expansion of alcohol availability into convenience, grocery and big box stores with no cap on the number of outlets.
- Grey-Bruce currently exceeds recommended alcohol outlet density, and any increase can result in higher levels of consumption and increased alcohol-related emergency department visits.
- Resources for PCPs:
  - [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#), released in early 2023 to replace the previous Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines, references 2 standard drinks or less to likely avoid alcohol-related consequences – a significant change from the Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines that references 10 standard drinks per week for women and 15 standard drinks for men. The guidance also emphasizes the link between alcohol use and cancer risk as well as the connection to other chronic diseases, injuries and violence.
  - [Knowing Your Limits with Alcohol: A Practical Guide to Assessing Your Drinking](#) provides tips and guidance for individuals considering changing their alcohol consumption to a lower-risk level. This tool can be used independently or with the guidance of a healthcare provider.
  - The [Canadian Clinical Guideline for High Risk Drinking and Alcohol Use Disorder](#) provides recommendations for the clinical management of high-risk drinking and alcohol use disorder to support primary care providers to implement evidence-based screening and treatment interventions.

## Resources for Primary Care Professionals

- Sept. 23, 2024 - Public Health Ontario released new measles resources, aimed at supporting health system stakeholders in their ongoing measles preparedness and response activities. The new resources provide information on:
  - [Post-exposure prophylaxis for individuals identified as contacts to a case of measles.](#)
  - [Infection prevention and control measures to support IPAC leads in assessing their organizational readiness for preventing and managing measles exposures in clinics and specimen collection centres.](#)
- Sept. 23, 2024 - In response to the rising cases of pertussis across Ontario, Public Health Ontario has released a new resource, [Pertussis in Ontario](#), which provides a comprehensive summary of pertussis activity in the province between January and June 2024, including case characteristics, incidence rates by age group and geography, and trends over time from 2007 to 2023.

## Educational Opportunities for Health Care Providers

- Oct. 3, 2024 - [PHO Rounds: Respiratory Season: Surveillance & Testing](#).  
**Intended Audience:** Public health units, primary healthcare providers, acute care, long-term care, congregate living settings.  
**Discussion:** An overview of the current epidemiological trends for COVID-19, influenza, and RSV activity provincially, nationally, and internationally, along with information on provincial data entry requirements for the 2024-25 surveillance period, the provincial reports that will be available for monitoring respiratory virus activity in Ontario, where specific surveillance content can be found, and the planned approach to testing across the provincial lab network for respiratory viruses.

## Grey Bruce Public Health Media Releases: September 2024

- Sept. 3, 2024 - [No-swim advisory lifted for Southampton Beach](#)
- Sept. 5, 2024 - [New GBPH dental clinic set to open in southern Bruce County](#)
- Sept. 9, 2024 - [GBPH issues Opioid Alert following reports of eight drug poisonings over seven days](#)