



Grey Bruce  
Public Health

# Primary Care Update

A monthly newsletter for healthcare practitioners in Grey-Bruce

Issue #36

February 2026

## Shortage of Benzathine Penicillin G (Bicillin® L-A)

- There is a national shortage of Bicillin® L-A—the preferred treatment for syphilis—expected to last until at least Feb. 16, 2026.
- During the shortage, the Ministry recommends providers restrict the use of Bicillin® L-A by using alternate treatments as outlined by the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).
- Conserved Bicillin® L-A should be used for:
  - Pregnant individuals (all stages) and their ongoing sexual contact(s). Note that infectious syphilis (primary, secondary, and early latent) only requires one dose of 2.4 million units of Bicillin® L-A, including during pregnancy.
  - Infectious cases (primary, secondary and early latent syphilis), regardless of HIV status, if adherence to alternative treatment and follow-up is uncertain.
  - Non-pregnant adults who have already initiated their treatment course with Bicillin® L-A should complete their therapy according to standard guidelines.
- Oral doxycycline is the preferred treatment for initiating therapy in non-pregnant adult patients with late latent, latent of unknown duration, or tertiary syphilis that does not involve the central nervous system.
- If there is no uncertainty regarding staging of late latent syphilis, clinicians may opt to defer initiation of treatment until the supply of Bicillin® L-A is restored.
- Grey Bruce Public Health will communicate updates or changes in guidance to health care providers as more information is received from the Ministry of Health.

## Promoting sexual health in Grey-Bruce

- Grey Bruce Public Health (GBPH) offers weekly sexual health clinics in Hanover and Owen Sound.
  - In Owen Sound, our nurse-led clinic offers free STI testing and treatment, contraceptive services, counselling and referrals including for patients with no OHIP coverage.
  - In Hanover, our same nurse-led services are offered, alongside an extended scope of physician-supported sexual and reproductive health services.
- GBPH offers select STI medications—azithromycin, doxycycline, ceftriaxone and benzathine penicillin G (please refer to treatment guidelines above)—as well as condoms, at no cost. An order form is available on our [website](#) along with our [quick-reference STI treatment](#) guide.
- Accessing reliable sexual health information can be challenging. As appropriate, please share the following credible resources with patients:
  - [Sex&U](#) (Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada)
  - [Sexual Health Ontario](#) (Ontario Public Health)
  - [SHILO](#) (sexual health Infoline Ontario), a free/anonymous e-chat and phone service staffed by counsellors available to discuss sexual health topics with clients in English, French and some other languages.

## ISPA Update: Upcoming distribution of school suspension notices

- Under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* (ISPA), Grey Bruce Public Health (GBPH) is required to have either an up-to-date immunization record or a valid statement of exemption on file for all students aged four to 17 years.
- To allow time for compliance, GBPH will issue school suspension notices to parents and guardians of students who do not meet ISPA requirements. **Notices will be sent out the week of Feb 23.**
- Issuing these notices **may increase the number of calls** your office receives from parents seeking immunization information. Promptly submitting immunization updates to Public Health after vaccine administration can help reduce follow-up calls to your clinic.
- To support GBPH's ISPA activities, we ask health-care providers to:
  - Fax updated immunization information for all Grey Bruce students to GBPH at 519-376-7782 immediately following administration; and
  - Provide parents or guardians with a copy of their child's updated immunization record. In Ontario, health-care providers must provide this service at no cost.
- For ISPA-related questions, contact a nurse in the Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Program at 519-376-9420, ext. 3910.
- Thank you for your continued collaboration and commitment to protecting Grey-Bruce residents from vaccine-preventable diseases.

## **Ministry of Health to decommission COVaxON**

- The Ministry of Health will decommission COVaxON, Ontario's COVID-19 vaccine reporting system, effective Mar. 13, 2026.
- The timeline for decommissioning is as follows:
  - **From now until Mar. 13, 2026, 4:59:59 p.m.**, all COVID-19 vaccine providers are expected to continue to record patient and vaccine product information for COVID-19 vaccine in COVaxON.
  - **Effective Mar. 13, 2026, at 5 p.m.**, COVaxON will be decommissioned.
    - Any doses administered on Mar. 13 or later must be documented per professional standards of practice by the administering professional.
- **April 2026 (specific date to be confirmed)** a new Panorama Guided Workflow (PGW) will be launched to manage COVID-19 vaccine inventory and reporting of administration.
  - Any doses administered during the transition period will need to be recorded.
- Health Care Providers that have ordered COVID-19 vaccine from Public Health have been contacted by the Ministry with instructions related to onboarding to the new PGW. The Ministry is providing direct assistance with this process and will continue to support providers through the decommissioning. If you have not received this direction, reach out to Monica Blair at [m.blair@publichealthgreybruce.on.ca](mailto:m.blair@publichealthgreybruce.on.ca).
- Panorama is well established in public health practice and has stored ISPA and school-based vaccination records for more than 10 years.
- Organizations offering COVID-19 vaccines will receive new agreements to enable access to Panorama.
- If you do not currently provide COVID-19 vaccines and are interested in onboarding to Panorama once the process is finalized, email Monica Blair at [m.blair@publichealthgreybruce.on.ca](mailto:m.blair@publichealthgreybruce.on.ca).

## **Resources for Primary Care Professionals**

- New clinical guidelines on [HIV Pre- and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis](#) are now available from the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ).

## **Webinars**

- [PHO Webinar: Efficiency Using AI Scribe](#) – Feb. 5, 2026.
- [PHO Webinar: Talk About Doxy PEP STIs](#) – Feb. 10, 2026.

## **Media Releases**

- [Public Health urging Grey-Bruce residents to protect against extreme cold](#) – Jan. 23, 2026.

Created and distributed by Grey Bruce Public Health

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