



MIDDLESEX
LONDON
Ontario Health Team

23-24 Fall Respiratory Illness Preparedness

Last Updated **January 18, 2024**



Intention of this slide deck

To provide Middlesex London Ontario Health Team (MLOHT) partners with the information they need to prepare for and respond to the upcoming 2023-24 respiratory illness season.



Key contacts & information for the respiratory season

- Ontario Health West will continue to work with you to address this surge in respiratory viruses.
- ML OHT is also a key support to mobilize local community support, escalations, information and resources.
- Please do not hesitate to reach out with any urgent issues.
- VP On Call ohwest_oucall@ontariohealth.ca | phone: 437-703-3235



Actions to sustain the system through the season:

- **Continue to prioritize vaccinations for staff and patients.** Vaccination continues to be one of the best ways to protect at-risk patients and our health care workforce as we head into the holiday season. Co-administration of the influenza and COVID-19 is encouraged where appropriate. Review the [COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance](#) and Public Health Ontario's [Focus On Vaccines for the 2023-24 Influenza Season](#) for details. RSV vaccine eligibility has now been expanded. The expanded groups who are eligible for the RSV high-risk vaccine program include those 60 years of age and older who are:
 1. Patients in hospital receiving alternate level of care (ALC);
 2. Patients receiving hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis;
 3. Recipient of solid organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplants;
 4. Individuals experiencing homelessness; and
 5. Individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit or Métis.
- **Adhere to the direction issued from Ontario Health:**
 - [Operational Direction: Rehabilitation and Complex Continuing Care Capacity and Flow](#), issued July 12, 2023
 - [Operational Direction: Fall/Winter Readiness and Response](#), issued October 3, 2023. In particular, rehabilitation and complex continuing care hospitals should activate surge plans to match the medical/surgery occupancy levels of surrounding acute care hospitals, which in the West Region is currently 112%.
 - [ED Mitigation and Closure Protocol](#) and [Obstetrics Mitigation and Closure Protocol](#) (for any hospitals at risk of service disruption)
- **Review our [memo to primary care providers](#)** (issued October 13, 2023) for a summary of supports for the fall/winter respiratory illness season.
- **Share information about how patients can access care in the community this holiday season**, including via Health811 and <https://www.urgentcareontario.ca>



Actions continued...

- **Share information about how patients can access care in the community this respiratory season**, including via Health811 and <https://www.urgentcareontario.ca>
- Visit the [Health811 resource hub](#) to access communications materials to promote awareness of the Health811 service.
- For those who have difficulty accessing the Health811 telephone service by dialing 8-1-1, it is also possible to reach the service by calling 1-866-797-0000 or by using the live chat function.
- [Register](#) and order supplies through the [Provincial PPE Supply Portal](#)
- **Order PPE and other supplies needed in advance**



Most Recent Updates from MLHU:

- Hospitalizations expected to be similar to the 2022-23 Respiratory Season and higher than pre-pandemic
- In the Southern hemisphere, individuals under 15 have been most impacted by influenza
- This year's influenza vaccine looks to be a good match for the circulating strains
- Vaccinations available include:
 - Influenza (High Risk Individuals & General Population)
 - COVID-19 (High Risk Individuals & General Population)
 - RSV (High Risk Individuals)



This slide deck covers 9 Functional Areas of Preparation¹:

- Surveillance, Modelling & Evidence
- Risk Communications and Public Health Advice
- Vaccines
- Testing
- Outpatient Care and Therapeutics
- Acute Care
- Infection, Prevention, and Control (IPAC) and Outbreak Management
- Vaccines
- Supplies & Equipment
- Health Human Resources

1. Ministry of Health - Seasonal Respiratory Pathogens Readiness and Response Guide – July, 2023



Surveillance, Modelling & Evidence

- All health system partners are expected to maintain and review their surveillance resources and monitor and assess the progression and magnitude of the respiratory pathogen season¹
- Provincial data on respiratory pathogen surveillance can be found via the [Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin](#) and the [Ontario COVID-19 Data Tool](#)¹
- All health care providers are expected to report cases and unusual clusters of influenza like illness activity to the local Medical Officer of Health ([Middlesex London Health Unit](#)), as required under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*¹
- [Middlesex-London Respiratory Surveillance report](#)



Risk Communications and Public Health Advice

- The Ministry of Health posts public information at [ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca)
- The Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU) communicates with local health system partners regarding the risk analysis for circulating respiratory pathogens and coordinate local response accordingly¹ via its weekly newsletter and regular webinars (<https://www.healthunit.com/hcp-alerts-and-updates>)
- The MLHU communicates with the public on risk and appropriate public health measures¹ via its website: <https://www.healthunit.com/>
- The MLHU communicates with the public to mitigate hesitancy and misinformation and promote evidence-informed public trust and confidence in vaccines¹
- All health system partners Follow public health and ministry recommendations



Vaccines

- The MLHU undertakes preparedness planning and coordinate local vaccination programs to administer vaccines, including providing leadership for hard-to-reach populations¹
 - Health system partners who will be administering vaccine to eligible clients/patients/residents/health care workers can order vaccine via the Public Health Ordering System (PHOS). If you are not yet registered to use PHOS can complete the [online registration form](#).²
 - MLHU Vaccine Clinic information for the public is available here: [Vaccination Clinics — Middlesex-London Health Unit](#)
- All health care providers should review vaccine policies and promote vaccination amongst clients, patients, residents and health care workers
- All health care providers should conduct timely reporting of any adverse events following immunization to local public health unit



COVID Vaccines for under 6 years of age:

- The Middlesex-London Health Unit's mass vaccination clinic has permanently closed, effective December 16, 2023.
- Children may still receive COVID-19 vaccine at a participating pharmacy or healthcare provider location.
- If primary care does not provide this vaccine, families with children between 2 to 5 years of age should be directed to call pharmacies to assess whether they provide COVID-19 vaccine to this age group; families with children between 6 months and 2 years of age should be directed to call the MLHU at 519-663-5317 to assess their vaccination options.



RSV Vaccine

Individuals eligible for the publicly funded vaccine program include residents living in:

- Long-term care homes,
- Elder Care Lodges, and
- Retirement homes licenced to provide dementia care services.
- Those 60 years of age and older who are:
 1. Patients in hospital receiving alternate level of care (ALC);
 2. Patients receiving hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis;
 3. Recipient of solid organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplants;
 4. Individuals experiencing homelessness; and
 5. Individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit or Métis.

The [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Fact Sheet for Long-Term Care, Elder Care Lodges and Retirement Homes \(French version\)](#) addresses these topics and more:

- Vaccine products available for use in Canada and the rollout plan for Ontario
- Eligibility, contraindications, efficacy, and side effects
- Indication, dose, and immunization schedule
- Ordering, reducing wastage, packaging, storage, and preparation



- Health care facilities and providers can order vaccine for publicly funded individuals from the Health Unit using [PHOS](#)
- Primary care providers can discuss the option to privately purchase RSV vaccine with patients who are 60 years of age and older that do not qualify for the publicly funded vaccine. Patients with a prescription from their HCP may obtain the vaccine from pharmacies, who are now able to order the vaccine at an approximate cost of \$250 - \$300.
- The RSV vaccine will not be available at MLHU clinics.

Visit the [Ministry of Health's](#) webpage for further information on RSV and the RSV Vaccine Program.



Testing

- Health care providers who provide testing in alignment with eligibility and clinical decision making should ensure adequate stock of testing kits, check expiration dates of testing kits, and ensure they are easily accessible for staff¹
- The Ministry of Health is inviting health care providers to order and provide RATs to their patients through the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP)²
 - Health care providers who are not currently enrolled in PASP and who would like to distribute RATs to their employees and/or patients, may enroll at <https://covid19.ontario.ca/provincial-antigen-screening-program>.
 - Ordering pathways for health care providers who intend to distribute RATS to their patients or employees, will continue to be through the [PPE Supply Portal](#)
 - For assistance in creating an account or accessing an existing account, or for any questions about orders and shipment, please contact sco.supplies@supplyontario.ca

14 Middlesex London OHT 1. Ministry of Health - Seasonal Respiratory Pathogens Readiness and Response Guide – July, 2023

2. Ministry of Health - Update on the Distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests in Ontario under the Provincial Antigen Screening Program – September 18/23



Testing (continued)

- Patients are eligible for PCR or rapid molecular testing if they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and belong to any of these [groups](#).
 - Primary Care is encouraged to offer PCR testing to high risk groups to enable timely access to therapeutics
 - Many pharmacies also offer PCR testing
- Provincial COVID-19 testing locations, including in London, Komoka and Strathroy can be found on the [Ministry's testing site](#)

1. Ministry of Health - Seasonal Respiratory Pathogens Readiness and Response Guide – July, 2023
2. Ministry of Health - Update on the Distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests in Ontario under the Provincial Antigen Screening Program – September 18/23



Outpatient Care and Therapeutics

Eligibility for Paxlovid treatment:

- [Symptoms](#) that are consistent with COVID-19;
- A positive lab-based PCR, rapid molecular, or rapid antigen test (including rapid tests done at home);
- The prescribing occurs within five days of symptom onset;
- The individual receiving the prescription is;
 - 60 years of age or older
 - 18 years of age or older and is immunocompromised
 - 18 to 59 years old and at a higher risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes including having chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes, heart or lung disease) or inadequate immunity against COVID-19 (i.e., not up-to-date on vaccines).
 - Eligible patients can access Paxlovid treatment via their primary care provider, walk-in clinic, Urgent Care, or local pharmacy



Outpatient Care and Therapeutics (continued)

- Remdesivir is an antiviral medication that must be taken intravenously (IV) and is administered as a three-day course.

Eligibility for Remdesivir treatment:

- Individuals with COVID-19 with a positive test result (e.g., PCR or rapid antigen test) who are at high risk of severe illness (including hospitalization) and cannot take Paxlovid due to a drug interaction or contraindication can receive remdesivir via the HCCSS pathway.
- Remdesivir should be initiated within 7 days of symptom onset.
- Eligible patients can access Remdesivir treatment via Home and Community Care Support Services: <https://www.healthcareathome.ca/document/remdesivir-infusion-referral-forms-procedures/>



Acute Care and Paramedic Services

- Hospitals and Paramedic Services monitor seasonal respiratory pathogen risks and associated surge impacts and coordinate with partners on surge response strategies, as necessary¹

1. Ministry of Health - Seasonal Respiratory Pathogens Readiness and Response Guide – July, 2023



Infection, Prevention & Control (IPAC) and Outbreak Management

- MLHU collaborates with congregate living settings (CLSs), investigates, supports and respond to an outbreak, including declaring the outbreak and declaring it over, as applicable¹
- IPAC Hubs support congregate living settings, including long-term care homes, retirement homes, residential settings funded by the Ministry of Health (MOH), residential settings for adults and children funded by Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), shelters, and supportive housing and; they¹:
 - Deliver IPAC education and training
 - Host communities of practice and networking opportunities for CLSs
 - Support the development of IPAC programs, policies and procedures within sites and organizations
 - Support assessments, audits and provide recommendations to strengthen IPAC programs and practice
 - Coach those with responsibilities for IPAC within CLSs
 - Support the development and implementation of outbreak management plans, in conjunction with public health partners and CLSs
 - Support CLSs to implement IPAC recommendations

To connect with our local IPAC Hub:

Middlesex London email: IDC@mlhu.ca; Elgin/Oxford: email: ipachub@swpublichealth.ca



Infection, Prevention & Control (IPAC) and Outbreak Management

- All health care provider organizations should¹:
 - Review and implement an IPAC and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program in accordance with associated ministry and PHO guidance
 - Review setting-specific outbreak readiness plans and ensure staff are aware and trained, as applicable
 - Ensure the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available and properly used, including training on its use for staff and that PPE is available for visitors, as needed
 - Report suspected outbreaks or unusual respiratory events to the local public health unit, as applicable; email: IDC@mlhu.on.ca
 - Follow any sector-specific guidance on IPAC



Supplies and Equipment

- All health care provider organizations should ¹;
 - Maintain a dependable stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE) and critical supplies and equipment (CSE)
 - Provide health care workers with training and information on the appropriate selection, conservation and safe utilization of all PPE
 - Incorporate organizational supply chain best practices and risk management strategies for fall respiratory season to mitigate any impacts to patient care
- [Register](#) and order supplies through the [Provincial PPE Supply Portal](#)²
 - Organizations who experience issues with supplies via this portal can email the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery Point of Contact (MPBSD PoC) at SCO.Supplies@ontario.ca and CC: karen.m.bell@ontariohealth.ca and tammy.meads@ontariohealth.ca

1. Ministry of Health - Seasonal Respiratory Pathogens Readiness and Response Guide – July, 2023
2. OH West - Operational Direction: Fall/Winter Readiness and Response – October 3, 2023



Health Human Resources

- All health care provider organizations should²:
 - Maximize health human resource (HHR) capacity by utilizing innovative models of care and expanded scopes of practice where needed.
 - Implement strategies to maximize influenza and COVID-19 vaccine uptake among health care providers, patients, residents, clients, and caregivers.
 - Encourage patients and clients to access [Health811](#) for non-urgent health inquiries and questions.
 - Ensure patients are aware of services available through pharmacies, including influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, COVID-19 treatment, and treatment for minor ailments.
 - Share information about available [mental wellness supports for health care workers](#).

2. OH West - Operational Direction: Fall/Winter Readiness and Response – October 3, 2023

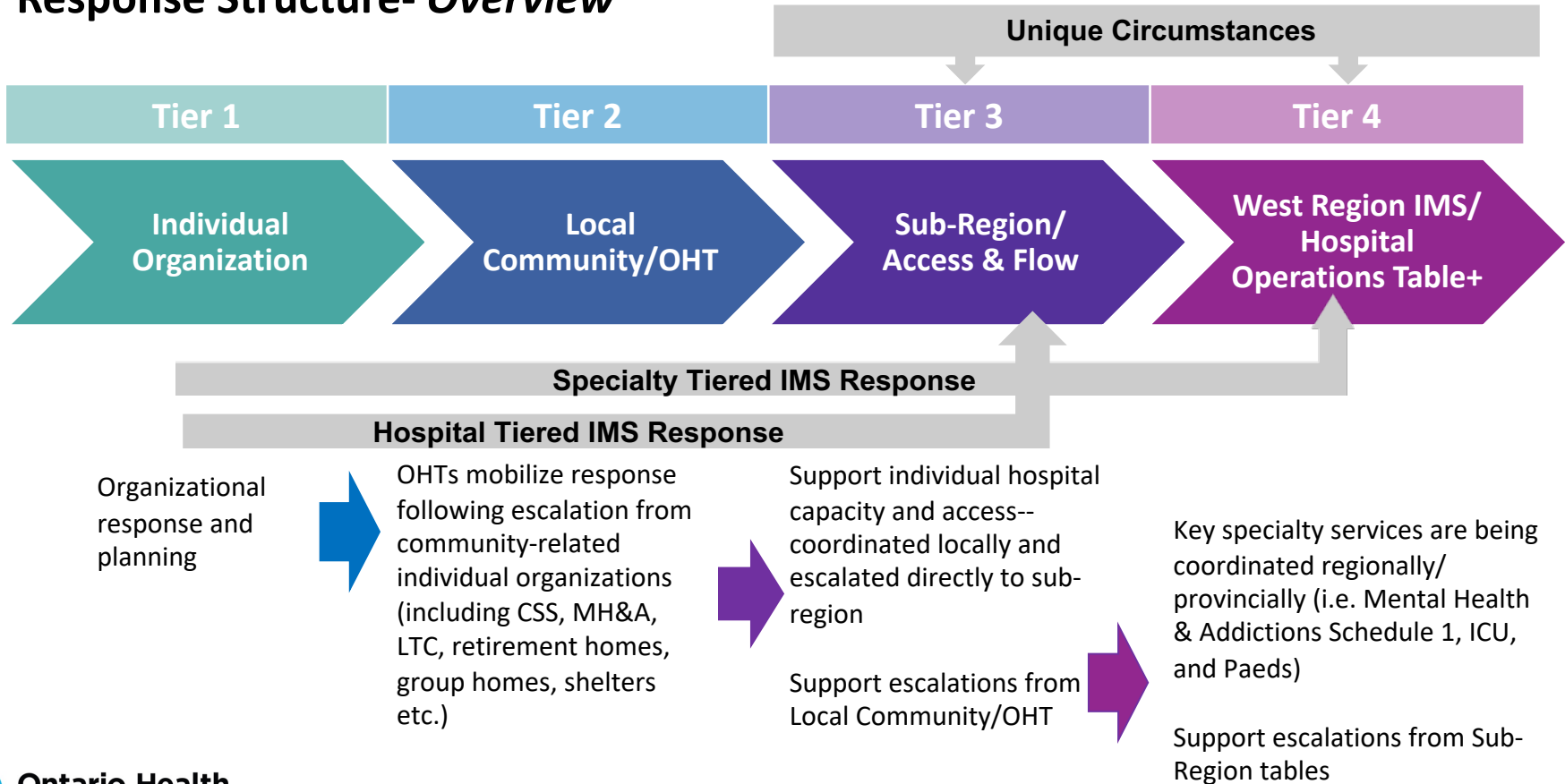


Ontario Health West Incident Management System (IMS)

- OH West Region has an Incident Management System (IMS) and regional pathways for escalation
- The IMS structure requires all providers to first manage organizational situations (e.g., access and flow, capacity challenges, health human resources shortages) internally by optimizing all levers available to them. It is imperative that all providers have an internal IMS plan to respond to emergent or critical situations within their organization.



Ontario Health West Region Tiered Incident Management System (IMS) Response Structure- *Overview*



Role of Ontario Health Team (OHT) Incident Management System (IMS)

Tier 2 support role:

- Point person for organizations working through a Tier 1 response to proactively advise of escalating or unresolved issues and the potential need to enact a Tier 2 response
- Receiving notification of need to trigger Tier 2 (from Lead of individual organization at Tier 1)
- Initiating and mobilizing the Tier 2 local community response including:
 - identification of an IMS Lead (sometimes referred to as an ‘incident commander’)—but not necessarily assuming the role of IMS Lead
 - notifying the OH West OHT IMS Key Contact
- Assisting with the coordination and connection of situationally appropriate system partners, including those who may not be formally members of an OHT
- Partnering with the OH West OHT IMS Key Contact to source out guidance tools or other resources, as appropriate, and bridge communication with Access & Flow sub-region contacts to advise of escalating or unresolved issues and the potential/actual need for enacting a Tier 3 response





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Summary of Referenced Resources & Additional Resources




Additional Resources/Summary of Resources

Resource	Location/Link
Ministry of Health - Seasonal Respiratory Pathogens Readiness and Response Guide (July/23)	https://files.ontario.ca/moh-seasonal-respiratory-pathogens-planning-guide-en-2023-07-18.pdf?_ga=2.16658486.1454114173.1695733106-1240018687.1666372540
Public Health Ontario – Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool	Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool Public Health Ontario
Operational Direction: Fall/Winter Readiness and Response – Ontario Health West (October 3/23)	 Adobe Acrobat Document
Update on the Distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests in Ontario under the Provincial Antigen Screening Program - Ministry of Health (September 18/23)	omoh-rat-update-sept2023 (1).pdf
Ministry of Long Term Care	https://ltchomes.net/LTCHPORTAL/Content/Snippets/2023-10-06-01-EN-ADM Memo Seasonal Respiratory Illness Preparedness.pdf
Ontario Health - Memo - Supports for the fall/winter respiratory illness season – Primary Care Providers (October 13/23)	 Adobe Acrobat Document
Memo – Seasonal Respiratory Illness Preparedness for Long-Term Care Homes (October 6/23)	ADM Memo – Seasonal Respiratory Illness Preparedness for Long-Term Care Homes (ltchomes.net)



Additional Resources/Summary of Resources

Resource	Location/Link
Ontario Health West – OHT Primary Care Checklist – 2023/2024 Fall & Winter Respiratory Preparedness – October 31/23	 Adobe Acrobat Document
The Ministry of Long-Term Care’s enhanced masking measures for non-outbreak situations being put into effect as soon as possible, and no later than November 7, 2023.	memo (French memo)

