

Changing the Way We Work

December 5, 2025: Infectious Disease & Current Public Health Issues

Panelists: Dr. Daniel Warshafsky, Dr. Kieran Moore

Moderators: Dr. Ali Damji, Dr. Eleanor Colledge

Many of us and the population have outdated COVID tests. What is the evidence that these tests can still be used?

If the tests are expired, we really can't be confident in the results. COVID tests can still be ordered by primary care providers through the supply Ontario portal if you need new ones. [PPE Supply Portal - Sign In](#)

How close is the match of the current COVID vaccine to circulating variants in Ontario?

The COVID match this year is good. The strain targeted in the vaccine is the LP.8.1. We are mostly seeing XFG now in Ontario, which is a hybrid strain of the LP.8.1 and LF.7. So, the LP.8.1 still provides good protection.

A patient recently tested herself with a dual swab for COVID and flu, how accurate are these tests?

The home antigen tests are roughly 50 per cent in terms of positively identifying a COVID or flu infection. So, they will miss it about half the time. As mentioned, for COVID we are quite confident in a positive being a true positive. With flu it is less specific depending on the test and so I would also consider the local epidemiology as well. If flu is highly prevalent, we are more confident in that positive result. If flu is rare, I would be less confident.

These additional questions and comments were answered live during the session. To view responses, please refer to the session recording.

- The Ontario Testing and Treatment information (updated Oct 24, 2025) indicates that COVID-19 rapid tests CAN be used in emergency rooms and hospitals. However, my hospital has said that rapid tests are not allowed. This causes a delay in care as we wait for PCR results for COVID. Can the province clarify this or facilitate physicians being able to use these tests?
- Can you please explain the 'percent positivity rate' figure I see on the Ontario Respiratory Virus tool? Who is getting swabbed to create this number? Is it people presenting to hospital or living in nursing homes only?
- Dr. Moore, in 2022 you stated that there was a transition from a mandatory order with respect to masking in hospitals to a "standard of care". "It is now a

normal state of affairs, my expectation is that all of these sites and partners will continue with all of the best practices”. Can you please comment on how we can encourage continued masking in healthcare? Not only does it not seem to be “standard of care” but some patients are reporting push back from healthcare providers when they request masking.

- Can you please comment of evidence for Paxlovid?
- Just a comment for Officers of Public Health, please can you communicate to family physicians before changing policies related to COVID-19. We were blindsided last summer when people were waiting to get it prior to trips and weddings (high risk events) only to find out you couldn't get it anywhere as of mid-summer. I found out from my patient, when we had a COVID Community of Practice 2 weeks prior and there was no mention of it. Then the Office didn't attend the next session to explain.
- What can be done to improve communication with the public in an era of disinformation and widespread suspicion of “expertise”?
- When will healthcare workers caring for those with bird flu (family doctors, ER, ID) access pre-vaccination. We are the front line who will die at the beginning of that eventual pandemic.
- Give is an update on bird flu please, community transmission????
- Ontario recommends a wearing a “tight-fitting, well-constructed mask in indoor public settings”. However, hospital staff wear loose fitting medical masks (if they mask at all). Is that because of cost? Or lack of knowledge?
- Hepa filters are supposed to reduce viral spread. Can you please review the evidence for this? Can we encourage their use in daycares and classrooms?
- Are we still really suggesting covid vaccination for low-risk people?
- Our office is seeing a TON of 2–3-year-old kids getting sick with high fevers for 5-6 days and cough - no swabs, is this likely flu or RSV given the information so far?
- my biggest challenge is pts hearing how ineffective flu vaccine is this year from leading health professionals and will not accept the vaccine even the elderly.
- What is Influenza A resistance against Tamiflu?