

Changing the Way We Work

July 26, 2024: Infectious Disease: Circulating Seasonal Illnesses & Important Vaccine Updates

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Moderator: Dr. Eleanor Colledge

Curated answers from CoP guests, panelists and co-hosts to the top five in-session questions posed by participants, based on current guidance and information available at the time.

Will there be provincially funded RATs this fall? Additionally, will the Ontario respiratory virus tool continue?

The current rapid antigen test inventory will expire by September 2024. As a result, shipments of rapid antigen tests have paused while the Ministry of Health and partner Ministries assess options to provide COVID-19 rapid antigen tests during the upcoming respiratory virus season. Further communications will be forthcoming as part of the Ministry of Health's 2024-25 Fall Respiratory Virus Planning.

The Ontario Respiratory Virus tool will continue to remain in operation

Can you please update us on mpox. Are the number of cases high?

We have seen an increase in the number of mpox cases over the last month. This was expected given the number of Pride events that have recently taken place across the province. Most of the cases are patients from the GTA, predominantly the downtown core. The vast majority of cases are in unimmunized or those who have only received one dose of the Imvamune vaccine, and they remain mostly mild in presentations. I would strongly recommend physicians offer and recommend this vaccine to all their eligible patients. The eligibility and details of the vaccine can be found here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/mpox-monkeypox#section-4>

Can you please give us an update on the avian flu? I have heard it is low risk, but is it possible that will change?

We have robust surveillance for avian influenza. Any positive cases identified in animals (e.g., poultry or cattle) are reported by the labs to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Human cases are also reported to public health and followed up on by local public health units to determine the source of infection. Considering the outbreak in cattle in the

US, this surveillance has been increased and there is regular contact between Canada and the US. To date, there have been no cases in dairy cattle in Canada, nor has it been identified in the milk supply (unlike in the US). There have also been no cases in humans in Canada, but there have been four cases related to dairy cattle and eight related to poultry in the US. Currently, the risk remains extremely low for the general population, and is being watched very closely to see if there are reasons to be more concerned.

What are we seeing in terms of measles prevalence right now?

Currently in Canada, it is extremely low! We have not seen any cases in Ontario in weeks. We also haven't been seeing spread beyond direct introduction from travelers in Canada. Globally, we are still seeing a lot of spread, especially in Europe and the Middle East/Central Asia. Everyone should make sure they are vaccinated prior to travelling.

Can you comment on the news surrounding the dosing changes to the HPV vaccine?

NACI shared new recommendations noting that only one dose of HPV vaccine is needed for people ages 9-20. For the rest of the year, Ontario will continue to use the 2-dose schedule, but we will be looking to change the program to align with the NACI recommendations next year. If you are counseling patients on doses, I would recommend looking at the NACI statement: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/national-advisory-committee-immunization-summary-updated-recommendations-hpv-vaccines.html>

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

- What do we know about the effects of repeated, multiple COVID-19 infections?
- I have seen three cases of TSH cases in young, healthy patients under the age of 55. I have not seen this in the past 20 years. Are any other family doctors seeing this?
- Are more cases of prediabetes presenting in young and healthy patients? Is it related to COVID-19?

- In terms of infant RSV protection, I understand that RSVpreF is available for pregnant individuals, but what about nirsevimab and Beyfortus? Will parents be able to purchase it privately for their infants once they are born?
- Pharmacists are telling my patients who received their last COVID-19 vaccine more than six months ago to not get an additional dose. While these patients wait till October, they could possibly get COVID-19 during the August peak. So why is this the recommendation?
- Is the recommendation still to wait three to six months post COVID-19 infection or after the last vaccine for the next dose?
- What is the effectiveness of the current vaccine against infection vs the new one in the fall?
- Will there be a new COVID-19 vaccine in the fall? When will university students living in residence be eligible?
- At what stage of testing is the COVID-19 nasal spray vaccine in?
- Can you please clarify the newly funded VAXNEWVANCE vaccine schedule for children? Specifically, for an infant with no prior vaccine history, should they receive three or four doses?
- Will Arexyl be covered by OHIP at some point?
- How often should we offer Tdap to healthy adults in addition to pregnant women?
- For moderately ill individuals with possible Listeriosis, how do you recommend collecting blood cultures (i.e., in hospital or outpatient lab)? I'm wondering specifically about the logistics of getting cultures taken for individuals who are at risk, but not sick enough to be admitted to the hospital.
- Are there any public health recommendations (e.g., Meningococcal B vaccine) before patients head to university in the fall?
- If a patient has received Pneumovax, do they still qualify for Prevnar 20? Should we recommend it, even if they must pay out-of-pocket?
- Why aren't we just giving Prevnar 20 to everyone?
- If you previously received Prevnar 13 when should you boost with Prevnar 20? Will it still be covered for patients over 65?
- Why is Prevnar 15 given to children under four instead of Prevnar 20?
- If a child with asthma has had their Prevnar 13 series and they are now five, should they get one dose of Prevnar 15?
- If an infant has started their vaccine series with Prevnar 13, do we just switch over to Prevnar 15 for remaining doses?
- If a child began their series with Prevnar 13, do we just continue with Prevnar 20 or do they need a certain number of Prevnar 15 doses?
- Are boosters required for Prevnar 20? For high risk or general population?
- Is Prevnar 20 government funded?
- Will nirsevimab be available in our family medicine clinics or hospitals once it is delivered?
- Should every infant receive Beyfortus? Not just high-risk infants?

- Can we order Beyfortus to our office the same way we order the routine vaccines?
- Where can we get COVID-19 vaccines for children under five? Are public health units running clinics?
- To clarify: if a pregnant parent receives Abrysvo, should the infant still receive Beyfortus once they are born? Also, can pregnant people only receive Abrysvo when they are between 32-36 weeks pregnant?
- If a parent gets RSV during pregnancy, do we still give the monoclonal vaccine to the baby at birth?
- Can we start to order Beyfortus now?
- How many doses of Pevnar 20 should high-risk children under six receive?
- Are there any plans to allow pharmacists to give some of these funded vaccines similar to flu and COVID-19 vaccines?
- Are there any benefits for patients over 65 who previously received Pevnar 13 to now receive Pevnar 20, even if they must pay out-of-pocket?
- Can we give Pevnar 20 to diabetic patients instead of Pneumovax regardless of age?
- For patients who had Arexvy last year, do they need another RSV vaccine?
- For patients that paid for Arexvy last year, can we advise them that they don't need another RSV vaccine this year?
- What will the strategy be for documenting the administration of Beyfortus in hospital?
- I think handout on all the vaccines updates would help as there are too many changes right now.
- For pregnant patients with due dates in September, would you recommend they receive Beyfortus in October (in clinic after they have given birth)?
- Are there additional benefits for infants to receive both Abrysvo in utero and Beyfortus when they are born?
- Can you send a one-pager with all the vaccine recommendations summarized?
- All pregnant patients should be offered the RSV vaccine?
- Can Abrysvo and Tdap be given together during pregnancy?