

Changing the Way We Work

Oct 27, 2023: Respiratory and Flu Season: Counselling Kids & Balancing Workload

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Moderator: Dr. Tara Kiran

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

COVID-19 Doses

Does the number of COVID-19 vaccines a person has received matter, or is the timing from the last COVID-19 vaccine more important?

Current recommendation is to get a COVID-19 vaccine if it has been more than six months since your last dose or infection. See page three of the following guidance:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_administration.pdf

If a patient has never received a COVID-19 vaccines and they get the XBB monovalent vaccine, do they need a booster dose or is one shot adequate?

For those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19, the recommendation is two doses for the Moderna XBB vaccine and three doses for the Pfizer XBB vaccine.

You can see more in Table 1 on page five in the following guidance:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_administration.pdf

What is the harm of being vaccinated every 4.5 months if you are high-risk for severe illness, especially if immunity begins to wane four months after you are vaccinated?

No harm that we have seen from any available data. However, you may not derive as much benefit from doses spaced more closely together.

It is hard to convince patients to get the COVID-19 vaccine every six months. How do we discuss with patients the benefits of getting vaccinated every six months when the virus continues to evolve?

Totally agree it is hard and you won't be able to convince everyone. If people are hesitant to get vaccinated, I would focus on high-risk patients and those who have not received a dose in over a year as they would get the most benefit out of receiving a new dose of the vaccine.

Long-term Risks of the COVID-19 Vaccine

I have been hearing talk about increased long-term risks of developing cancers is associated with the COVID-19 vaccines. Would you please summarize?

Currently there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause cancer, lead to recurrence, or lead to disease progression. The National Cancer Institute is a good place to go for the most up-to-date information on this: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coronavirus>.

Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine During Pregnancy

Are there any concerns with getting the COVID-19 vaccine during the first trimester of pregnancy when a fever / overheating may be a possible cause of miscarriage?

There is no sign that having the COVID-19 vaccine during the first trimester causes miscarriage, so it is safe to get.

When should a pregnant individual receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

It can be offered at any stage in pregnancy, so best to update if the patient is due for the vaccine (i.e., if it has been six months since their last vaccine or infection).

You can read more in the vaccine guidance on page 18:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_administration.pdf



CFPC Family Medicine Residency Increase

What is the OCFP's position on the proposed extension of family medicine training to three years?

The OCFP isn't responsible for overseeing planning and implementation of residency programs - that falls to the CFPC. We have, however, heard that many of our members have concerns about the third year.

OCFP will continue to focus on addressing the issues that family doctors are facing today and making sure family doctors have the support they need now. Our priority is making sure that family doctors have the supports they need, including the support of teams, to provide the quality of care that patients in Ontario need and deserve.

RSV Vaccines

If a physician writes a prescription for the RSV vaccine to be given by the pharmacist, will they still charge the patient for this service?

At this time (until the regulation changes) pharmacists don't have a billing code they can use to administer the vaccine, only to dispense. So, it will be up to the pharmacist, but they can charge for the service.

Do you have the patient education materials that pharmacists use to counsel patients on the RSV vaccine? I have found that my patients have received minimal information from the pharmacist and yet the request for a prescription for RSV has been sent to me.

There will soon be patient handouts available on the provincial RSV website:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/respiratory-syncytial-virus>

Masking

Should participants in an indoor group psychotherapy program wear a mask?

If individuals are at high risk for complications, then it is reasonable to mask or suggest masking to the group if it takes place in a smaller, poorly ventilated area. It's important to ensure people don't attend when they have symptoms.

COVID-19 Vaccine in Children

Is there any new data on the long-term side effects of COVID-19 vaccination in the pediatric age group? Particularly with cancer?

There has been no safety signal for any long-term side effects have been identified in the pediatric group and no increased risk of cancer.

COVID-19 Treatments

Can you comment on the effectiveness of ensitrelvir in Japan compared to Paxlovid? When might we expect to receive it?

The studies seem to indicate that it can decrease length of symptoms, but I haven't seen as data on hospitalization in high-risk patients. I'm not about approval and availability for ensitrelvir in Canada.

Is Paxlovid safe for pregnant patients? Can it have any effect on fetal organogenesis if it given to patients who are under 12 weeks pregnant?

There have been several studies to date that have demonstrated safety of Paxlovid for pregnant individuals. This one is a good review of the evidence:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9866309/>.

High-risk Patients

For high-risk patients who tests positive for COVID-19 and are on a direct oral anticoagulant (DOAC) the Ontario Science Table recommends remdesivir or to change DOACs as an alternative. Now that remdesivir is hard to access, what is the downside of changing to another DOAC?

You can access remdesivir via homecare:

<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/Access-to-remdesivir-in-the-community.pdf>

Otherwise, you would need to work with a pharmacist ensure appropriate prescription change.



COVID-19 Nasal Spray

Has there been any progress in the clinical trial of the nasal spray COVID-19 vaccine?

It's still in Phase 2 trials, but initial studies have been very promising. It likely will not be available for a couple years out at the current rate of progress.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Scribes

Which AI scribe is being used?

Mutuo Health's Autoscribe.

Long COVID

What is the current incidence of Long COVID?

There is a huge range of estimates. Here is a recent study from the US:

[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7232a3.htm#:~:text=Long%20COVID%20includes%20a%20wide%20range%20of%20ongoing%20respiratory%2C%20neurologic,to%2041%25%20\(1\)](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7232a3.htm#:~:text=Long%20COVID%20includes%20a%20wide%20range%20of%20ongoing%20respiratory%2C%20neurologic,to%2041%25%20(1))

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

- Should we all be masking indoors again to stop the spread of all the respiratory viruses?
- Is RSV that bad for people 65+? I have not seen or heard this in my career until now. I am worried the RSV vaccine is being pushed by pharmaceutical companies and could have side effect signals (i.e., blood clots with Astra Zeneca.) What's the risk of delaying the vaccine by one month?
- Can you please update us on the progress with having Paxlovid dispensed without a positive test for eligible patients (i.e., in advance of travel)? What steps have we taken?
- I read on CNN's Five Things that there have been studies that indicate a higher rates of stroke risk in elderly patients who receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot at the same time. Comments?
- In regard to the new RSV Arexvy vaccine, what are your thoughts about timing and target group, especially with respect to the COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot?
- Is there a preference on choosing Moderna over Pfizer or vice versa when both are available?
- How accurate are rapid antigen tests (RATs) now?
- Should Prevnar 20 be recommended to everyone over 65?
- For maximum benefit of the COVID-19 vaccine, should there be an interval between a Prolia shot (for example) and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine?
- What is the actual incremental benefit of another vaccination in the pediatric population for those that already have the primary series and prior infection?
- Is there risk in administering the COVID-19 vaccine in children under 5? Is it effective in this age group?
- Should we administer RSV vaccines this fall?
- Is there a combined vaccines for COVID-19, influenza and RSV?
- Thank you for the information on vaccinating kids, but can you comment on the efficacy of the current XBB vaccine in the pediatric population?
- Can pregnant people receive the COVID-19 vaccine at any time or should they wait until after the first trimester?
- Is there a best time during pregnancy to receive the COVID vaccine? What is the interval from their last dose of vaccine if they were vaccinated pre-pregnancy?
- Any news on pediatric RSV vaccine which is available in the US?
- What interval between the RSV and the COVID-19 vaccine is required?
- The RATs we have expire in December 2023. Are they safe to use beyond the expiry date?
- Can you talk more about the AI scribe?

COVID-19
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