

COVID-19 Update

For more information:
Canada.ca/coronavirus

Information for Indigenous communities:
Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous



INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA – Ontario Region – December 2, 2021

Ontarians received some unwelcome news this week - a new variant of concern known as Omicron was discovered and it has been detected in Ontario. While we don't yet know if this variant is more serious or transmissible, this news is a reminder that COVID-19 continues to challenge us. While we are not yet out of the woods, there is hope with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine having recently been approved for use in 5-11 year olds. This marks a major milestone in the fight against COVID-19. Finally, some of the youngest members of society can be afforded the same protection as those of us who have chosen to be vaccinated have come to enjoy. Think back to the relief you felt when you became fully vaccinated, realizing that your chances of becoming seriously ill were significantly lowered. With COVID-19 infecting children at increasing rates, this presents a great opportunity for families to do the same for their children. Increased vaccination rates overall will also help lower the spread of COVID-19 among community members.

We are aware that some community members are anxious about vaccinating their children. We recognize and appreciate that fear; however, the children in your communities who get vaccinated will be in good company with millions of children in the United States and thousands of children in Ontario already having received the vaccine. The clinical trials of the vaccine given to children did not identify any safety concerns and there were no instances of vaccine-related myocarditis or pericarditis. While Omicron may mark a renewed battle against this disease, getting vaccinated remains an important step toward protecting ourselves, our loved ones and our communities against COVID-19. We also want to remind you and your communities to continue doing what has protected us so far: limiting close contact to immediate household members; wearing a mask in indoor public settings; wearing a mask outdoors when unable to maintain 2 metres of distance from those from different households; following provincial gathering limits; and washing hands frequently.

Garry Best, Regional Executive and Anne Scotton, Regional Director General

Measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern

The Omicron variant of concern has been identified in multiple Canadian provinces, including Ontario. Canadians are reminded that vaccination, in combination with public health and individual protective measures, is working to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its variants in our communities. Early data suggest that the Omicron variant may be more transmissible but evidence is limited at this time.

In response to concerns about Omicron, the Government of Canada has implemented a number of new border measures affecting travellers entering Canada. All Canadian citizens, permanent residents and people with status under the *Indian Act*, who have been in Botswana, Egypt, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, or Zimbabwe in the previous 14 days, will be subject to enhanced pre-screening and arrival testing, screening, and quarantine measures.

In the coming days, all fully vaccinated travellers arriving by air from departure points other than the United States will be subject to arrival testing. Fully vaccinated travellers will be required to quarantine while they await the results of their arrival test.

The Government of Canada will continue to assess the evolving situation, monitor case data, and adjust border measures as required. Read about Canada's response to Omicron by [clicking here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Proof of vaccination for Indigenous peoples in remote communities travelling within Canada

Travel accommodations for individuals travelling to or from remote communities who cannot provide proof of full (double) vaccination have been temporarily extended beyond November 30, 2021, when they were originally set to expire. COVID-19 PCR testing continues to be provided to northern travellers free of charge. For the latest guidance on travel requirements for Indigenous peoples travelling to or from remote communities, please visit [this webpage](#).

New COVID-19 resources for children

ISC Ontario Region's COVID-19 Communications Resources List has been updated with new resources for children and youth. Access it [here](#).

COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario

*All data reflects totals from 8 p.m. on November 29, 2021

- **27,129** Daily doses administered
- **22,978,037** Total doses administered
- **11,259,729** People fully vaccinated

Max the Vax: COVID-19 Vaccination Resources for Children and Caregivers

With support from the Canadian Medical Association, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has launched a new webpage dedicated to sharing reliable, factual resources about COVID-19 and vaccines for children and caregivers. Resources include games, videos, tips on how to answer questions from kids and more. All resources can be found on the [Max the Vax webpage](#).

Health Canada authorizes use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty (10 mcg) pediatric formulation COVID-19 vaccine in children 5 to 11 years of age

On November 19, 2021, Health Canada [authorized the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty \(10 mcg\) pediatric formulation](#) COVID-19 vaccine in children 5 to 11 years of age. This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized in Canada for use in this age group and marks a major milestone in Canada's fight against COVID-19. After a thorough and independent scientific review of the evidence, the department has determined that the benefits of this vaccine for children between 5 and 11 years of age outweigh the risks.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) released [updated guidance](#) on the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty (10 mcg) pediatric formulation COVID-19 vaccine, recommending that a complete two-dose series may be offered to children 5 to 11 years of age who do not have contraindications to the vaccine. Based on emerging evidence from adult immunization, which suggests longer intervals result in a stronger, longer lasting immune response and may lower the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis, NACI is recommending a dosing interval of 8 weeks or more between the first and second dose.

Health Canada has placed terms and conditions requiring Pfizer-BioNTech to continue providing information to Health Canada on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine in this younger age group. Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada will continue to closely monitor the safety of this vaccine, and will take action if any safety concerns are identified.

For information on the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#), as well as other authorized vaccines and treatments in Canada, please visit the [COVID-19 vaccines and treatments portal](#).

Speech from the Throne

On November 23, 2021, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, delivered the Speech from the Throne to open the first session of the 44th Parliament and outline the government's agenda. [Click here](#) to read the full speech or browse by topic. Visit [this link](#) to learn more about what the Speech from the Throne is and why it matters.

Update on Operation Remote Immunity 3.0

Operation Remote Immunity 3.0 (ORI 3.0) is progressing without issue. Teams from Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) and the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) have travelled to 21 remote communities over the last two weeks to administer COVID-19 vaccine booster shots as well as first and second doses.

Since ORI 3.0 began, Health Canada has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children aged 5-11. To respond to this, SLFNHA and WAHA have increased the size of their vaccination teams travelling to communities in order to offer first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to children in this age group. Increasing the size of the vaccination teams means that ORI 3.0 will remain on schedule.

In fact, the ORI 3.0 team is already planning and scheduling the next phase of ORI, which will see vaccination teams administer second doses for children aged 5-11.

Next week, clinics will be taking place in Sachigo Lake, Deer Lake, Pikangikum, Eabametoong, North Spirit Lake, Marten Falls and Sandy Lake with SLFNHA, and in Peawanuck, Kashechewan, Moosonee, Fort Albany and Attawapiskat with WAHA. While the operation is focused on providing booster shots and first doses to children aged 5-11, any community member who is eligible to be vaccinated is welcome to get their first or second dose while ORI 3.0 is in your community. Clinic details are shared on the WAHA and SLFNHA websites and Facebook pages, and hard-copy information packages are being shared by community liaison officers.

Update on winter roads funding

Since the inception of the Indigenous Community Support Funding in April, 2020, the Ontario Region has approved a total of \$17,624,240.78 to support perimeter security at First Nations communities, including \$4,524,925.74 for winter road security during the 2020-21 fiscal year.

COVID-19 Cases

*As of December 1, 2021, @ 12:00 p.m.

- **3,166** confirmed in-community
- **141** active cases on reserve
- **37** deaths
- **2,988** resolved (94.4%)



Please feel free to contact the FNIHB Ontario COVID-19 generic inbox: sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca if you or your community members have any information needs.