



## Important Public Health Alert #9: Fall Respiratory Viruses

To: Chiefs, Health Directors, Pandemic Leads

Date: October 31, 2022

The weather is changing and the landscape of respiratory viruses across the province is also changing. This fall will be a more complex respiratory illness season with multiple respiratory viruses circulating alongside COVID-19. Influenza A cases have been reported in Ontario Region. In addition, respiratory syncytial virus activity (RSV) is circulating in Canada above expected levels impacting the pediatric population. Furthermore, COVID-19 activity continues in the province, and we expect to see ongoing COVID-19 activity this fall with the continued presence of highly transmissible Omicron variants. An increase in activity of multiple respiratory viruses creates a more complex respiratory illness season and has the potential to further stretch the health system.

There are actions that can be taken to decrease the risks of these respiratory viruses to individuals and the community. **Vaccination remains the most important way to protect yourself, your family and your community.** We recommend all those eligible to get vaccinated as soon as possible with your annual flu shot and ensure you are up-to-date on your COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccination against influenza can decrease the risk of influenza-related complications, hospitalizations, and deaths. Up-to-date vaccination against COVID-19 continues to be effective in decreasing the risk of severe disease. It is safe and convenient for individuals aged five years and older to get your COVID-19 and influenza vaccines at the same time.

**We ask all individuals to stay home if they are sick.** You do not need to wait to have testing done to isolate. This is one of the best things you can do to limit the spread. Individuals at higher risk of severe illness, with symptoms of COVID-19 or influenza should seek care as soon as possible, as you may benefit from available treatments. Please continue to follow all public health and safety measures, such as wearing a well-fitting mask, hand-washing and distancing to protect those at risk of severe disease around you. As the weather cools, an increase in indoor gatherings increases the risk of transmission. Please consider adding layers of precautions such as masking and/or rescheduling if there are cases in your community.

Indigenous Services Canada remains committed to supporting First Nation communities in their response to COVID-19 and this more complex respiratory illness season.

Respectfully,

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Please note, This advice is intended to supplement, not replace, the advice of local public health authorities.