

Program/Service Information Report

COVID Vaccinations

January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023

To: Board of Health

Meeting Date: March 6, 2024

Report No.: **BH.01.MAR0624.C04**

Key Points

- COVID-19 is a continuously evolving virus which, combined with other seasonal respiratory viruses, continues to be a threat to the health and wellbeing of Ontarians and is likely to cause significant seasonal pressure on health system resources annually.
- The leading cause of both hospitalization and death for respiratory viruses remained COVID-19, whereas prior to the pandemic it was influenza.
- In comparison to the year prior, in 2023 there were 65% fewer doses of COVID-19 vaccine administered in WDG, and 84% fewer doses administered in WDGPH operated clinics. These decreases are consistent with decreases seen in the province.¹

Program Requirements

Compliance with OPHS and Accountability Indicators:

In compliance

Not in compliance. If not in compliance, provide additional information about the variance and how it will be addressed.

Highlights

COVID-19 Vaccines

NACI highlighted a need to adapt vaccination strategies and schedules this season to align with changing circumstances which include, a significant portion of the population having either received COVID-19 vaccinations or developed immunity through prior exposure to SARS-CoV-2.² While the overall risk to Ontarians of COVID-19 has been diminished, COVID-19 is a continuously evolving virus.

As of February 2, 2024, there have been over 360 hospitalizations in WDG of patients with COVID-19, and over 14,300 in Ontario for the current respiratory season. This represents approximately 70% of total hospitalizations due to COVID-19, influenza, and RSV.³ (see Table 1)

Table 1: Respiratory Virus Hospital Admissions (2023-2024 season)

	Total admissions COVID-19, influenza, and RSV	Influenza	% total admissions	COVID-19	% total admissions	RSV	% total admissions
WDG	503	101	20.1	362	72.0	40	8.0
Ontario	20,048	3,104	15.5	14,304	71.3	2,640	13.2

Health Canada authorized XBB.1.5 containing mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, Moderna Spikevax XBB.1.5 and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty Omicron XBB.1.5 in September, 2023.² Individuals vaccinated with the XBB.1.5 updated formulation were expected to benefit from a better immune response against the strains that were circulating.⁴ These vaccines were approved for use with both those previously unvaccinated and those previously vaccinated.² NACI recommendations regarding eligibility for COVID vaccine focused on age, date of prior dose or prior infection. Use of the XBB.1.5 vaccine was the first time that an additional dose was authorized for children 6 months to less than 5 years of age who had been previously vaccinated.⁴

NACI made a strong recommendation that immunization was particularly important for those at increased risk of COVID-19 infection or severe disease.⁴ These populations include:

- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings
- Individuals with underlying medical conditions that place them at higher risk of severe COVID-19
- Individuals who are pregnant
- Individuals in or from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities
- Members of racialized and other equity-deserving communities
- People who provide essential community services

WDGPH community clinics commenced October 17, 2023, initially with the Moderna Spikevax XBB.1.5 vaccine, adding the Pfizer Comirnaty product which became available October 17 and was incorporated into clinics as of October 23, 2023. These two mRNA vaccines were essentially used interchangeably, following eligibility criteria with no absolute contraindications to either. COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in WDG totalled 77,401 with 14,559 of those doses provided at WDGPH clinics. This represented a significant decrease in doses administered from 2022-2023 but was in keeping with other health units and the trend across the province (see Table 2).¹

Table 2: Local and Provincial (ON) COVID-19 Vaccine Administration

	WDGPH Clinics	ON PHU Clinics	Total WDG Doses	Total ON Doses
2022	88,617	4,535,674	220,876	9,949,390
2023	14,559	701,122	77,401	3,273,070
Year-over-Year Change	-84%	-85%	-65%	-67%

Novavax Nuvaxovid XBB.1.5 vaccine was authorized by Health Canada on December 5, 2023. This vaccine is protein-based and recommended for those who are unable or unwilling to receive an mRNA vaccine.⁴ WDGPH received supply December, 2023, and remains the sole administrator for this product in our region due to minimal demand.

WDGPH 2023-2024 Respiratory Season Clinic Campaign

The community clinic campaign centred on 3 primary locations, Stone Road Mall (Guelph), Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex (Fergus) and Monora Park Pavilion (Orangeville). Clinics commenced October 17, 2023, and continued for 6 weeks.

Influenza and COVID-19 mRNA vaccines were offered simultaneously at all WDGPH clinics. One Saturday clinic as well as some evening clinics were offered at all locations. In addition, several clinics were held in a variety of locations throughout Wellington and Dufferin counties, primarily at community libraries to increase access and reduce barriers in more rural areas of our region. Throughout the 6 weeks, most clinics were fully booked with walk-in clients accommodated wherever possible. WDGPH continues to prioritize accessibility and health equity for COVID-19 and influenza immunization i.e. clients were booked into WDGPH office clinics as appropriate.

In addition, WDGPH promoted and supported respiratory season immunizations in our region by:

- Monitoring facilities that stored vaccines to ensure cold chain requirements are being met.
- Promoting the importance of influenza and COVID vaccination through physicians' advisories, social media platforms, on the WDGPH website and advertising in local newspapers.

As we adjust to respiratory season illnesses, we are working with the Ministry of Health and local stakeholders toward establishing a more predictable pattern for our community clinics, fall and potentially spring.

Related Reports

BH.01.APR0523.C07 – Influenza and COVID Vaccinations

References

1. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Respiratory Illness Trends. Accessed here on Feb 4, 2024:
<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNWUxZTY0MjUtMmMyNi00N2M5LTk4NTctODBiMjVIMzZiN2Q4IiwidCI6IjA5Mjg0MzdILTFhZTItNGJhNy1hZmQxLTY5NDhmY2I5MWM0OCJ9>
2. Government of Canada. Public Health Agency of Canada. An Advisory Committee Statement (ACS) National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI): Summary statement. Updated guidance on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in individuals who have not previously been vaccinated against COVID-19. Oct 2023. Accessed here on Feb 3, 2024: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/national-advisory-committee-immunization-summary-updated-guidance-covid-19-vaccines-individuals-not-previously-vaccinated.html>
3. COVID-19 Regional Hospitals Report, Visual Analytics Hub, Capacity Planning and Analytics Division, Ontario Ministry of Health and LTC. Accessed here on Feb 3, 2024: <https://vap.health.gov.on.ca/analytics.html>
4. Government of Canada. Public Health Agency of Canada. An Advisory Committee Statement (ACS) National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI): Addendum to the guidance on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the fall of 2023. Sept 2023. Accessed here on Feb 4, 2024:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/national-advisory-committee-immunization-addendum-guidance-use-covid-19-vaccines-fall-2023.html>

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