



Statement

Updated Guidance for Perinatal Healthcare Providers

In response to the rapidly spreading Omicron COVID-19 variant in Ontario

December 20, 2021

Use of N95 Respirators

The SARS-CoV-2 Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant of concern is circulating in Ontario and cases are rising quickly. Omicron is considered highly transmissible and is now the dominant variant in Ontario.¹ COVID-19 hospitalizations and intensive care unit (ICU) admissions are increasing and forecasted to rise substantially. The protection of perinatal healthcare providers (HCPs) and their patients, families and communities remains of highest priority for the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH).

PCMCH supports the interim recommendation of Public Health Ontario (PHO) for use of fit-tested, seal-checked N95 respirators, eye protection, gown and gloves when providing direct care for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.²

A point-of-care risk assessment should continue to be completed before every patient interaction or task to determine whether there is a risk of the HCP being exposed to COVID-19, and to select the correct PPE required to protect oneself and others. Aerosol-generating medical procedures continue to pose an increased risk of COVID-19 infection to HCPs within close range (or anticipated to be) of the procedure; thus, fit-tested N95 respirators should be used as a minimum level of respiratory protection.

Importance of Vaccination and Eligibility for Booster Shots

As of December 5, 2021, COVID-19 vaccine coverage for pregnant Ontarians demonstrates that this population group continues to have lower vaccination rates than the overall population.³ COVID-19 vaccine booster doses can help increase protection against Omicron infection. Pregnant people that are 18 years of age and older are eligible as of December 20, 2021 to receive a booster shot.⁴ HCPs should continue to encourage their patients who are planning a pregnancy, currently pregnant or breastfeeding to get vaccinated as soon as possible, and in any trimester, as vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy. There is a growing body of evidence to support the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy. In parallel, HCPs should continue to reinforce the need for patients to wear well-fitted high-quality masks, practice physical distancing and frequent handwashing, limit close contacts and avoid crowded indoor spaces.

References

¹ Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table and Modelling Consensus Table (2021, December 16). *Update on COVID-19 projections*. Slide deck presented at the December 16, 2021, Press Conference. https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Update-on-COVID-19-Projections_English_2021.12.16.pdf

² Public Health Ontario (2021, December 15). *Interim IPAC recommendations for use of personal protective equipment for care of individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19*. Technical brief. https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?sc_lang=en

³ Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (2021, December 16). *ICES COVID-19 Dashboard*. <https://www.ices.on.ca/DAS/AHRQ/COVID-19-Dashboard>

⁴ Government of Ontario (2021, December 15). *All Ontarians 18+ eligible for COVID-19 booster appointments at three-month interval*. News release. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001352/all-ontarians-18-eligible-for-covid-19-booster-appointments-at-three-month-interval>



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