

MEDIA RELEASE

**Hospitalizations for Respiratory Illnesses On the Rise Ahead of the Holidays
*Ontarians Can Protect Themselves and Loved Ones by Getting Vaccinated***

December 7, 2022, Toronto, ON – With the winter holiday season fast approaching, Ontario hospitals have already seen a significant influx of hospitalizations due to seasonal respiratory illnesses. Following the strong recommendation made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore earlier this week, the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) urges Ontarians to protect themselves and their loved ones by getting vaccinated for influenza, COVID-19 and RSV, if eligible.

Updating your vaccinations not only keeps your families and communities safe and happy during the holiday season, it also helps alleviate the additional pressures our health care system experiences during this time of year. COVID-19, the flu and RSV have the potential to add significant pressure on heavily stressed health care systems and have serious, potentially life-threatening consequences for some individuals. The more people are vaccinated and stay well and safe, the greater the capacity our hospitals have to provide the acute life-saving care to those who need it most.

Ontario hospitals are already seeing evidence of this. Hospital occupancy is already tight at 97.8% and ICU (intensive care unit) occupancy was 75.8% as of December 3rd, 2022. As of Nov 30th, the pediatric ICU occupancy is 76%. Moreover, the number of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19, influenza and RSV has been steadily increasing. The number of ongoing/active COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care has also been trending upwards. As of mid-November, there were approximately 6,200 patients waiting for an alternate level of care (ALC) – or care in a more appropriate setting, including home care or long-term care. High ALC rates, along with increased demand, contribute to high occupancy rates, crowded emergency departments (EDs) and longer ED wait times for patients and their families.

The OHA encourages everyone to roll up their sleeves and receive the vaccinations they are eligible for as soon as they are able, or to reach out to their family physician if they have any questions or concerns. Influenza vaccines and appointments continue to be available through pharmacies and primary health care providers, and it is not too late to get your vaccines ahead of the upcoming holiday season. We each have a role to play in protecting ourselves, one another, and the health care system.

- Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association

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Ontario Hospital Association

Established in 1924, the OHA serves as the voice of the province's public hospitals, supporting them through advocacy, knowledge translation and member engagement, labour relations, and data and analytics with the goal of helping hospitals build a better health system. The OHA is also attuned to the broader strategic questions facing the future of the province's health care system and we work to ensure Ontario's hospitals have a voice in shaping this longer-term vision.

For more information:

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