

RISK REDUCTION IS ADDITIVE—THE SWISS CHEESE APPROACH

COVID-19 cases are rising in most Public Health Units due to Delta variant with continuous increase in positivity. Based on limited data, the new variant of concern called Omicron is highly transmissible and could cause a rapid increase in case numbers over the next month. Public health measures that are effective against the Delta variant are also effective against Omicron. However, three vaccine doses are the key for protection against the new variant based on some early data from the UK. Implement as many protective layers as possible, including improved ventilation when indoors, to reduce the risk of infection, hospitalization and serious illness and get your booster dose as soon as you are eligible.

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR OMICRON B.1.1.529

Issue	Risk Level	Degree of Uncertainty
Importation in Ontario	High	Low
Increased Transmissibility	Moderate	High
Disease Severity	Moderate	High
COVID-19 Re-infection	Moderate	High
Lowered Vaccine Effectiveness	Moderate	High
Impacts on Testing/ Surveillance	Low	Low

Source: www.publichealthontario.ca

halton.ca 311 [Click here to access full PDF](#)

COVID-19 vaccines: Myths vs Facts

MYTH	FACT
The COVID-19 vaccines are not safe because they were developed too quickly and not tested enough.	The vaccines were approved quickly because Health Canada made it a priority. The clinical trials for the COVID-19 vaccine were just as strict as they are for any other vaccine. Government agencies continually monitor and review vaccine safety. Visit Health Canada's website to learn more about how vaccines are approved.
The COVID-19 vaccines don't work against variants of concern.	The COVID-19 vaccines appear to provide protection against most variants of concern. While some fully vaccinated people may still become sick from the virus, the vaccines do provide good protection against severe illness caused by the COVID-19 variants.
I don't need the vaccine because I already had COVID-19.	Even if you have had COVID-19, it is important that you get the vaccine. Re-infection with COVID-19 is possible. At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again from COVID-19. The protection you get after having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person.

HOW TO SAY OMICRON

- ✔ British pronunciation: o·muh·kron (o as in plot)
- ✔ American pronunciation: aa·muh·kraan
- ✘ Biden pronunciation: om·nee·kron

NEW MEASURES TO PROTECT LONG-TERM CARE AND RETIREMENT HOMES

On December 14, 2021, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, introduced new measures to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and caregivers in long-term care and retirement homes from COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. These temporary measures will help reduce the risk of transmission during the winter months and protect the progress the province has made in stopping the spread of the virus and its variants throughout these settings.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES

- Effectively immediately, all general visitors are required to be fully vaccinated to enter
- AS OF DECEMBER 17, 2021:
- All staff, students, volunteers, and caregivers are required to be tested at least twice a week using rapid antigen test prior to entry, regardless of vaccination status
 - A negative test is required upon entry for all visitors and support workers who provide essential services, unless they had a negative test the day before
 - Caregivers are required to be fully vaccinated, unless medically exempted or attending to a resident in palliative situation. Caregivers must have their first dose by **Dec 20, 2021** and second dose by Feb 21, 2022
 - Limit indoor visits to a max of two people per resident at a time and four people for outdoor
 - Cohort residents during high-risk activities and avoid large social activities
 - Limit social day trips to only residents who are fully vaccinated and require those residents who leave the home for social reasons to be actively screened upon their return. And if there is a known exposure to a case, isolation and a PCR test is required
 - Suspend overnight absences of residents for social purposes regardless of vaccination status

Source: <https://news.ontario.ca>

RETIREMENT HOMES

AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2021:

- All staff, volunteers, contractors, and essential caregivers are required to be tested twice a week using rapid antigen test prior to entry, regardless of vaccination status
- General visitors and support workers are required to be tested every single time prior to entering a retirement home using rapid antigen test, regardless of vaccination status
- Retirement homes are strongly encouraged to restrict general visitors to only those who are fully vaccinated.
- Limit the number of visitors and group sizes for social activities and events
- Implement additional testing and isolation requirement for residents when they return from an overnight absence
- Increase IPAC audits, including on hand hygiene, PPE donning and doffing, universal masking, respiratory etiquette, cleaning/disinfecting and physical distancing

Source: <https://news.ontario.ca>

In addition to the enhanced measures required by the Ministry of Long-Term Care, all homes should **strongly urge** residents, caregivers and staff to get a third/booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Emerging evidence suggests three doses are significantly more effective against Omicron than two.



COVID-19: Holiday Season and Visiting



Before going to a Holiday gathering:

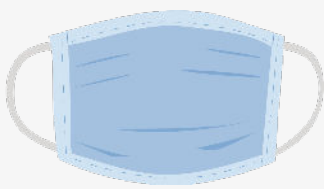


Check in to see if there are any people attending who are unwell.



If anyone has travelled, ensure they are not required to be self-isolating.

Reminders:



Wear your mask

When in public spaces and where 2m distance cannot be maintained, wear your mask!

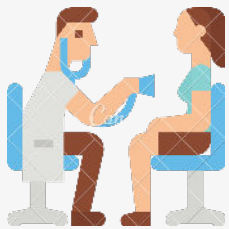


Clean Hands

Clean your hands often and always before touching your face!

COVID-19 infection occurs through direct and indirect contact, and short range droplets.

Returning from a Holiday gathering:



Ensure you are feeling well. If unwell, alert a member of your care team and stay in your room.



Check in with the gathering organizer to see if anyone who attended has become unwell.

HAPPY
HOLIDAYS

Learn more at
www.covid-19.ontario.ca/