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The holiday season is a special time for residents/clients of Long-Term Care (LTC) homes, Retirement Homes (RH), and other Congregate Living Settings (CLS) to connect with family, friends, and loved ones, fostering a sense of community and joy. However, it is essential to balance these celebrations with IPAC measures to protect everyone's health. This includes holiday decorations and hosting events that will be attended by multiple family members of residents/clients during the holiday season.

Although holiday decorations do not pose a high risk of transmission, they may harbour dust and micro-organisms. Certain guidelines should be implemented this year to ensure that everyone has a safe and responsible holiday season. Below are some of the IPAC recommendations for holiday festivities and decorations applicable to most health care and congregate living settings.

#### **DECORATION SELECTION AND DISPLAY**

- Confirm with facilities/maintenance/operations that decorations (e.g., lights, artificial trees, wreaths) do not pose a fire or safety risk prior to placement.
- Always perform hand hygiene before and after handling decorations.
- Low or no-touch decorations (i.e., Christmas trees, wreaths, and wall decorations) are preferred seasonal decorations to limit transmission. All decorations that may be touched by residents or clients must be wipeable or cleanable.
- Decorations should not interfere with regular clinical or housekeeping duties, and should not obstruct signs, access to PPE, or hand hygiene dispensers.
- Choose laminated/plastic/wipeable decorations that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Decorations should be placed using adhesives that are easy to remove and do not leave residues. Decorations should also be displayed/removed in a timely manner to prevent dust buildup.



- Decorations are best in locations that are out of public reach or under continuous view of staff to monitor for any handling concerns.
- Avoid placing holiday decorations on horizontal and high-touched surfaces (such as hand rails), work stations, and medication rooms. Residents/clients may choose to decorate their room but staff should advise to minimize clutter and not to place decorations on window sills or table tops to allow for adequate environmental cleaning.
- The integrity of ceiling tiles must not be compromised by hanging decorations or signs. Avoid lifting ceiling tiles to hang items.

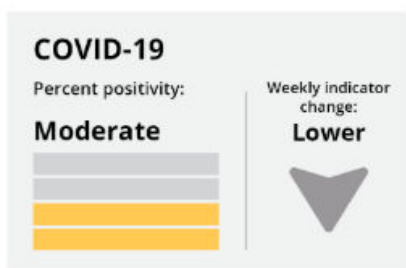
**COSTUMES AND CELEBRATIONS**

- If appropriate to the care setting, a costume may be worn by staff if it does not interfere with practicing hand hygiene or the use of any personal protective equipment.
- Special character visits (i.e., Santa) should avoid direct contact with residents and clients if gloves are part of the costume and cannot be removed for hand hygiene. In addition, entry to rooms on Additional Precautions should not be allowed.
- Caregivers and general visitors may join a resident in sharing a meal/celebrating in a communal space during holiday gatherings. Caregivers and visitors should be mindful of respiratory virus activity in the community and remember that masking and PPE requirements are at the discretion of the home or organization based on their IPAC risk assessment.
- Remember to stay home if you are feeling unwell so that everyone can enjoy time with family, friends, and loved ones. Let’s spread joy and laughter this holiday season, not germs!

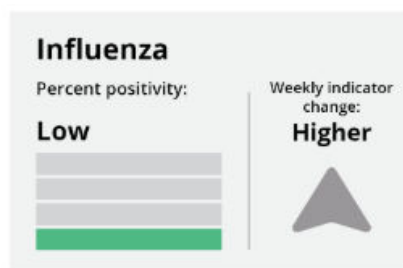
**ONTARIO RESPIRATORY VIRUS TOOL**

**Weekly Summary - November 17, 2024 to November 23, 2024 (surveillance week 47)**

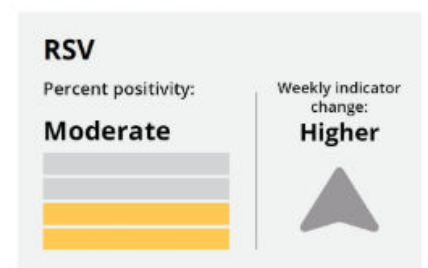
The images below provide a high-level assessment of respiratory virus activity in Ontario. Percent positivity for the most recent week of data is used to assign either a low, moderate, high or very high category based on the intensity of circulating viruses in the province.



Percent positivity: ■ <10.0% ■ 10.0% - 16.9% ■ 17.0% - 24.9% ■ ≥25.0%



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Percent positivity: ■ <5.0% ■ 5.0% - 9.9% ■ 10.0% - 14.9% ■ ≥15.0%

Sources: [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca) | [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca) | [ipac.vch.ca](http://ipac.vch.ca) | [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) | [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca) | [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca) | [www.rhra.ca](http://www.rhra.ca) | [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)