

Long-Term Care Home/Retirement Home COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccination Rates 2022

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Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive this report for information.

Key Points

- COVID-19 and influenza vaccination are one of the most effective ways to help prevent severe illness and death from COVID-19 and influenza.
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) collects vaccination rates from Long-Term Care Homes (LTCH) and Retirement Homes (RH) to monitor vaccine coverage and inform local immunization strategies.
- Overall, influenza and COVID-19 vaccination coverage among residents of LTCH and RH across Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) is high, although there is variation across facilities. Vaccination coverage among employees is lower.
- WDGPH is actively planning for Spring and Fall 2023 vaccination campaigns and will be exploring additional opportunities to increase vaccine uptake.

Background

Residents of Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes continue to be among the highest risk groups for severe illness, hospitalizations and death from COVID-19 and influenza.^{1,2} Risk factors such as older age, chronic health conditions, and a congregate living environment all contribute to an increased risk for this population.^{1,2,3} Evidence has shown that COVID-19 and influenza vaccination are one of the most effective ways to help prevent severe illness and death from COVID-19 and influenza, respectively.^{1,2,4}

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that people who are capable of transmitting influenza to those at high-risk should receive their annual vaccination. Immunization of care providers has been shown to reduce the risk of severe illness and death among the individuals for whom they provide care.¹ In fact, NACI considers influenza vaccination to be an essential component of the standard of care for all health care workers for their own protection and that of their patients.¹ Research has also shown that the vaccination of health care workers and residents is associated with a decreased risk of outbreaks.¹

LTCH/RHs are responsible for encouraging vaccination of residents and staff, developing vaccination policies, keeping up to date records of vaccinations, and providing vaccination clinics and/or establishing plans for vaccine administration.^{4,5} As per the Ontario Public Health Standards, health units are responsible for monitoring vaccine coverage and working with community partners to improve vaccine uptake.⁶ To promote vaccine uptake in LTCH/RHs for the Fall 2022 season, WDGPH provided the following supports:

- Administration of a survey to all facilities who were not yet independently vaccinating to assess eligibility and needs for WDGPH to provide continued on-site support. The WDGPH mobile clinic team followed up with homes to plan and coordinate support for the fall where needed.
- Development of a vaccination preparedness package for LTCH/RHs to support independent vaccine administration. This package detailed the required steps homes must complete to store, handle and administer COVID-19 and influenza vaccine, and included links to multiple training and education resources.
- Fall outbreak preparedness calls and visits with LTCH/RHs conducted by the WDGPH Infection Control Team, which included a review of information to support vaccination.
- Vaccine administrator support, including verification that facility onsite fridges meet all necessary requirements for cold chain management, and distribution of vaccines.

- On-site vaccination support at 5 facilities by the WDGPH mobile clinic team in collaboration with St. Joseph's Health Centre Guelph's Nurse Led Outreach Team (NLOT).
- Collection of influenza and COVID-19 immunization rates in LTCH/RHs through an online survey to identify gaps in vaccine coverage and improve immunization rates by connecting homes to additional support when needed (e.g., GO-VAXX, pharmacy, NLOT, COVax support).

Collection of Immunization Rates

The Ministry of Health has been collecting influenza immunization rates of health care workers in hospitals and LTCHs since 1999. In 2020-21 the Ministry began collecting influenza immunization rates of residents in LTCHs as well. Historically, health units collected this information from facilities and reported to the Ministry, but as of 2021-22, Public Health Ontario began collecting this information on behalf of the Ministry. In addition to the Ministry's reporting requirements, WDGPH initiated a separate survey in December 2022 to collect influenza and COVID-19 fall booster immunization rates from LTCH/RHs across WDG. This data has been important locally for monitoring vaccine coverage earlier in the season and informing additional strategies to support facilities and improve immunization rates.

Discussion

In WDG, all Long-Term Care Homes and the majority of Retirement Homes are now able to independently administer influenza and COVID-19 vaccine to residents. Facilities have worked hard to build this capacity, in collaboration with support from WDGPH, and are in a much better position to vaccinate residents now compared to earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic. Some facilities offer on-site vaccination for staff as well, and other facilities encourage staff to seek vaccination in the community, such as through vaccine clinics or pharmacies.

Vaccination Rates for Employees of LTCH/RH

Table 1 provides summary data on facility influenza vaccination rates for employees. The median facility employee vaccination rate is 69% for LTCHs and 59% for RHs in WDG. This is lower than the last comparable data available from 2019, when the median facility employee vaccination rate was 87% for LTCHs and 75% for RHs.⁷

Table 1: Percentage of employees with influenza vaccine by facility type as of December 15, 2022.

Facility Type	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Long-Term Care Home	68.9%	51.8%	98.7%
Retirement Home	58.5%	15.4%	100%

Vaccination Rates for Residents of LTCH/RH

COVID-19 fall boosters became available to residents of Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes as of September 12, 2022, and influenza vaccine became available as of October 1, 2022. COVID-19 fall boosters are updated vaccines that target two different strains of COVID-19 (original and the Omicron variant) thus offering better protection.

Table 2 provides summary data on facility influenza and COVID-19 fall booster vaccination rates for residents of LTCHs and RHs. For LTCHs, the median facility influenza vaccination rate for residents is 90% and the median facility COVID-19 fall booster rate is 82%. For RHs, the median facility influenza vaccination rate for residents is 93% and the median facility COVID-19 fall booster rate is 82%.

Resident vaccination rates are high for both influenza and COVID-19 fall booster, but they are higher for influenza. Although influenza and COVID-19 fall booster vaccination rates are comparable between LTCHs and RHs, there is more variation in coverage across RHs. There is also more variation in vaccine coverage for COVID-19 fall boosters compared to influenza vaccines, with some facilities reporting COVID-19 fall booster rates below 50%. It is important to note, however, that not all residents were eligible for COVID-19 boosters at the beginning of the fall. Residents with recent COVID-19 infections were recommended to wait at least 3 months before receiving their booster. For some facilities that experienced a COVID-19 outbreak at the end of summer/early fall, this may have impacted a large percentage of residents. In addition, some facilities commented that consent from residents (or substitute decision makers) was lower for COVID-19 boosters than for influenza vaccines.

In progress reports provided by the Ministry to Public Health Units, LTCH/RHs in WDG continue to have higher resident vaccination rates compared to the provincial average.

Table 2: Percentage of Long-Term Care and Retirement Home residents with influenza and COVID-19 fall booster vaccine as of December 15, 2022

Long-Term Care Homes		
	Influenza vaccine	COVID-19 Fall booster
Median	89.6%	81.9%
Minimum	76.4%	47.2%
Maximum	95.0%	90.5%
Retirement Homes		
	Influenza vaccine	COVID-19 Fall booster
Median	93.3%	82.1%
Minimum	71.4%	40.0%
Maximum	100.0%	100.0%

For immunization rates for each LTCH and RH in WDG and for more information about the data reporting and analysis please refer to the Appendices.

Seasonal Timing of Vaccinations

Seasonal influenza activity in Canada usually begins to increase over the fall and peak in the winter months.¹ The timing of influenza vaccines is of critical importance to ensuring protection early in the season before exposure to influenza is more likely. Although the seasonality of COVID-19 has not yet been established, indoor activities in the fall and winter promote the spread of illness. In addition, COVID-19 vaccine protection has been shown to wane over time, so timing vaccinations with the latest NACI recommendations is important to ensuring maximum protection.²

Table 3 shows the percentage of Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes that began providing influenza and COVID-19 fall booster by month. In WDG, the majority of LTCHs and RHs began providing influenza vaccine within the first month it became available. Overall, most LTCHs and RHs took longer to begin providing COVID-19 fall boosters to residents after vaccines were available, although the majority of homes still began providing before the end of October. Planning COVID-19 booster vaccinations at facilities can be challenging, as some residents may be eligible at different times depending on if they experienced a COVID-19 infection, especially for facilities that experienced significant outbreaks. Tracking of vaccination status/date of last COVID-19 dose and planning appropriately is critical to ensuring residents are offered the vaccine as soon as they become eligible. When possible, co-administration of COVID-19 and influenza vaccines is recommended to help facilitate the timely rollout of vaccinations.

Table 3. Percentage of Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes that began to provide influenza and COVID-19 fall booster by month.

Long-Term Care Homes		
	Influenza vaccine	COVID-19 Fall booster
September	N/A	43%
October	93%	43%
November	0%	14%
December	7%	0%
Retirement Homes		
	Influenza vaccine	COVID-19 Fall booster
September	N/A	57%
October	91%	22%
November	9%	13%
December	0%	9%

Next Steps

On March 3, 2023, NACI released guidance recommending an additional COVID-19 booster dose in the spring of 2023 for individuals at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 and who have had at least 6 months from the last COVID-19 vaccine dose or infection.² A spring vaccination campaign is currently underway for long-term care homes, retirement homes and other congregate living settings from April – June 2023. WDGPH is following up with facilities to confirm plans for spring COVID-19 boosters and to help coordinate additional support for vaccinations where needed. Since the majority of LTCHs and RHs across WDG began vaccinating residents relatively early in the fall 2022 season, most facilities will be able to begin vaccinating residents throughout April 2023. This timing is particularly important as it could potentially have an impact on the timing of fall booster doses, pending NACI recommendations.

WDGPH has also started initial planning for a more robust fall influenza and COVID-19 2023 vaccination campaign. Opportunities to increase vaccine uptake in facilities, such as educational webinars/Q&A sessions to promote the importance of ongoing vaccinations and share the most up-to-date evidence will be explored. Key areas of focus will include:

- Focused efforts to promote vaccine uptake among facility employees, given the low vaccination rates.
- Targeted efforts to promote vaccine uptake at facilities with lower vaccination coverage, especially for COVID-19 boosters. Although overall resident COVID-19 booster rates are relatively high, facilities did vary in coverage, and some facilities continue to report low vaccination rates.

- Identifying strategies to maintain the high vaccination rates seen at most facilities, especially since at a population level, vaccine uptake tends to decrease with each increasing COVID-19 dose.²

Health Equity Implications

Residents of Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes continue to be among the highest risk groups for severe illness and death from influenza and COVID-19.^{1,2} Vaccinations are one of the most effective ways to protect individuals from these severe outcomes and reduce the health disparities experienced by this population. WDGPH will continue to monitor vaccination coverage of residents in LTCH/RHs as a priority population, in accordance with the Ontario Public Health Standards, and collaborate with LTCH/RHs to promote vaccine uptake.

Conclusion

Overall, influenza and COVID-19 vaccination coverage among residents of long-term care and retirement homes across WDG is high, and WDGPH would like to commend facilities for their efforts in protecting the health and wellbeing of residents.

Although overall facility vaccination rates are high for residents in WDG, LTCH/RH employees report lower vaccination rates. In addition, vaccine coverage varies across facilities, especially for COVID-19 boosters. As WDGPH plans for Spring and Fall 2023 vaccination campaigns, additional strategies to increase vaccinations will be explored.

Vaccinations remain one of the best ways to protect LTCH/RH residents from severe illness and death from influenza and COVID-19, and WDGPH will continue to work in collaboration with facilities to promote and support vaccine uptake.

Ontario Public Health Standards

Foundational Standards

- Population Health Assessment
- Health Equity
- Effective Public Health Practice
- Emergency Management

Program Standards

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being
- Food Safety
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Growth and Development

- Immunization
- Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control
- Safe Water
- School Health
- Substance Use and Injury Prevention

2023 WDGPH Strategic Directions

- People & Culture:** WDGPH has an organizational culture of engagement, inclusion and agility.
- Partner Relations:** WDGPH collaborates with partners to address priority health issues in the community.
- Health System Change:** WDGPH is positioned to be an agent of change within the broader health sector.

References

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6. Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirement for Programs, Services and Accountability [Internet]. 2021 Jun [cited 2023 Mar 7]. Available from: <https://tinyurl.com/ynz5pn6f>
7. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Program/Service Information Report. Universal Influenza Immunization Program including Hospital and Long-Term Care Staff Immunization Rates [Internet]. 2020 Mar 4 [cited 2023 Mar 7]. Available from: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8v8hnt>

Appendices

1. Immunizations rates for each Long-Term Care and Retirement Home in WDG

Appendix A

Influenza Immunization Rates at Long-Term Care Homes in WDG as of December 15, 2022

Facility	Employees			Residents		
	Total Employees	% Immunized ^{a,b}	# Medically Exempt	Total Residents	% Immunized ^a	# Medically Exempt
Avalon Care Centre	139	51.8%	0	103	91.3%	0
Caessant Care Arthur LTCH	81	76.5%	0	62	90.3%	0
Caessant Care Fergus LTCH	63	65.1%	0	60	85.0%	0
Caessant Care Harriston LTCH	100	85.0%	15	74	93.2%	1
Dufferin Oaks LTCH	227	57.7%	2	157	85.4%	0
Eden House Care Facility LTCH	78	56.4%	0	72	76.4%	0
Elliott Community LTCH	153	≥95%	0	85	89.4%	0
LaPointe-Fisher Nursing Home	83	56.6%	0	69	94.2%	4
Morrison Park Nursing Home	33	87.9%	3	20	≥95%	0
Royal Terrace LTCH	124	89.5%	0	67	92.5%	0
Shelburne Residence LTCH	65	55.4%	1	44	81.8%	0
St Joseph's Health Centre Guelph LTC*	N/A	N/A	N/A	223	84.8%	1
Strathcona Long Term Care	106	72.6%	0	96	89.6%	0
The Village of Riverside Glen LTCH	253	53.0%	1	182	87.4%	0
Wellington Terrace LTCH	335	89.0%	8	173	93.6%	1

* Vaccination rates for LTCH and hospital employees are combined, so LTCH employee rates were not calculated

Data Caveats:

- a) Percent (%) immunized data includes only known immunizations. The immunization rate could be higher, as “unimmunized” or “immunization status unknown” were reported together by facilities.
- b) The term employees includes permanent or temporary/full-time or part-time employees who receive a direct paycheck from the facility (i.e., on the facility’s payroll), regardless of clinical responsibility or patient/resident contact. This category does not include staff on long-term leave (e.g., maternity, paternity, disability)
- c) Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes reported facility vaccination rates to WDG Public Health via an online survey. Data reflect seasonal immunizations provided to staff/residents up to December 15, 2022.
- d) Vaccination rates from each facility were used to calculate facility summary statistics.

Appendix B

Influenza Immunization Rates at Retirement Homes in WDG as of December 15, 2022

Facility	Employees			Residents		
	Total Employees	% Immunized ^{a,b}	# Medical Exemption	Total Residents	% Immunized ^a	# Medically Exempt
Avalon Retirement Lodge	30	20.0%	0	63	81.0%	0
Bethsaida Retirement Home	10	≥95%	0	23	82.6%	0
Birmingham Retirement Community	35	45.7%	0	61	85.2%	0
Caessant Care Fergus RH	Did not submit					
Caessant Care Harriston RH	18	50.0%	0	25	84.0%	0
Caessant Care Retirement Arthur RH	16	93.8%	0	34	91.2%	0
Chartwell Montgomery Village RH	78	15.4%	0	210	≥95%	0
Chartwell Wellington Park Retirement	45	62.2%	0	120	90.0%	1
Countryview Retirement Residence	6	50.0%	3	7	71.4%	0
Eden House Care Facility RH	78	56.4%	0	72	76.4%	0
Elliott Community RH	53	≥95%	0	129	≥95%	0
Fox Run Retirement Home	6	≥95%	0	8	≥95%	0
Hamilton's Hometown Retirement Living	N/A	N/A	N/A	16	93.8%	0
Heritage House RH	30	50.0%	0	70	80.0%	0
Heritage River Retirement Residence	49	69.4%	0	123	87.8%	0
Highland Manor Retirement Home	35	88.6%	2	76	94.7%	2
Lord Dufferin Centre RH	19	68.4%	0	45	93.3%	0
Norfolk Manor Retirement Home	28	32.1%	1	39	82.1%	0
Royal on Gordon RH	52	76.9%	1	91	93.4%	1
Royal Terrace RH	124	89.5%	0	50	≥95%	0
Shelburne Retirement RH	10	80.0%	0	27	≥95%	0
Stone Lodge Retirement Home Oxford	53	37.7%	0	81	≥95%	0
The Village of Arbour Trails RH	190	18.4%	0	311	≥95%	1
The Village of Riverside Glen Retirement Home	195	58.5%	0	180	≥95%	0

Data Caveats:

- a) Percent (%) immunized data includes only known immunizations. The immunization rate could be higher, as “unimmunized” or “immunization status unknown” were reported together by facilities.
- b) The term employees includes permanent or temporary/full-time or part-time employees who receive a direct paycheck from the facility (i.e., on the facility’s payroll), regardless of clinical responsibility or patient/resident contact. This category does not include staff on long-term leave (e.g., maternity, paternity, disability)
- c) Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes reported facility vaccination rates to WDG Public Health via an online survey. Data reflect seasonal immunizations provided to staff/residents up to December 15, 2022.
- d) Vaccination rates from each facility were used to calculate facility summary statistics. One retirement home in WDG did not submit data and was therefore not included in overall Retirement Home vaccination rates.

Appendix C

COVID-19 Fall Booster Immunization Rates of residents at Long-Term Care Homes in WDG as of December 15, 2022.

Facility	Total Residents	% Immunized ^a	# Medically Exempt
Avalon Care Centre	103	84.5%	1
Caessant Care Arthur LTCH	62	54.8%	0
Caessant Care Fergus LTCH	60	61.7%	0
Caessant Care Harriston LTCH	74	90.5%	1
Dufferin Oaks LTCH	157	88.5%	0
Eden House Care Facility LTCH	72	47.2%	0
Elliott Community LTCH	85	83.5%	0
LaPointe-Fisher Nursing Home	69	85.5%	0
Morrison Park Nursing Home	20	85.0%	1
Royal Terrace LTCH	67	83.6%	0
Shelburne Residence LTCH	44	70.5%	1
St Joseph's Health Centre Guelph LTC	223	79.4%	1
Strathcona Long Term Care	96	71.9%	0
The Village of Riverside Glen LTCH	182	81.9%	0
Wellington Terrace LTCH	173	61.3%	0

Data Caveats:

- a) Percent (%) immunized data includes only known immunizations. The immunization rate could be higher, as “unimmunized” or “immunization status unknown” were reported together by facilities.
- b) Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes reported facility vaccination rates to WDG Public Health via an online survey. Data reflect seasonal immunizations provided to staff/residents up to December 15, 2022.
- c) Vaccination rates from each facility were used to calculate summary statistics.

Appendix D

COVID-19 Fall Booster Immunization Rates of residents at Retirement Homes in WDG as of December 15, 2022

Facility	Total Residents	% Immunized ^a	# Medically Exempt
Avalon Retirement Lodge	63	50.8%	0
Bethsaida Retirement Home	23	65.2%	0
Birmingham Retirement Community	61	88.5%	0
Caessant Care Fergus RH	Did not submit		
Caessant Care Harriston RH	25	40.0%	0
Caessant Care Retirement Arthur RH	34	52.9%	0
Chartwell Montgomery Village RH	210	94.3%	0
Chartwell Wellington Park Retirement	120	≥95%	0
Countryview Retirement Residence	7	42.9%	0
Eden House Care Facility RH	72	47.2%	0
Elliott Community RH	129	89.9%	0
Fox Run Retirement Home	8	≥95%	0
Hamilton's Hometown Retirement Living	16	50.0%	0
Heritage House RH	70	71.4%	0
Heritage River Retirement Residence	123	84.6%	0
Highland Manor Retirement Home	76	94.7%	2
Lord Dufferin Centre RH	45	88.9%	0
Norfolk Manor Retirement Home	39	82.1%	0
Royal on Gordon RH	91	89.0%	0
Royal Terrace RH	50	68.0%	0
Shelburne Retirement RH	27	88.9%	0
Stone Lodge Retirement Home Oxford	81	49.4%	0
The Village of Arbour Trails RH	311	72.3%	0
The Village of Riverside Glen Retirement Home RH	180	91.7%	0

Data Caveats:

- a) Percent (%) immunized data includes only known immunizations. The immunization rate could be higher, as “unimmunized” or “immunization status unknown” were reported together by facilities.
- b) Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes reported facility vaccination rates to WDG Public Health via an online survey. Data reflect seasonal immunizations provided to staff/residents up to December 15, 2022.
- c) Vaccination rates from each facility were used to calculate summary statistics. One retirement home in WDG did not submit data and was therefore not included in overall retirement home vaccination rates.