

SUBJECT: Providing Immunizations during COVID-19
Date: April 21, 2020
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To: Primary Care Providers, Physicians, Emergency Departments,
Hospitals, Infection Control Practitioners
From: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO

The Ministry of Health has issued guidance regarding the provision of immunizations during COVID-19. This guidance document, with a poster summarizing the recommendations, can be downloaded from WDGPH's website, on the *COVID-19 Information for Healthcare Providers* page.

Background

Physical (social) distancing measures are reducing opportunities for person-to-person spread of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs). However, there is still the potential for these infections to spread in the community, particularly when physical distancing measures are relaxed. It is critical that our community maintain adequate levels of herd immunity for the most important VPDs.

The new guidance outlines Ministry of Health recommendations for how immunizations should be delivered. The most important groups to immunize include:

- Infants/Toddlers due for their primary series and booster doses (2-month through 18-month vaccines)
- Individuals meeting high-risk immunization criteria
- Health care workers

Some groups, such as older adults' and those with high-risk medical conditions, are recommended to self-isolate as much as possible given their vulnerability to COVID-19. For these groups, attending a clinic setting solely for receiving vaccines should be avoided.

For all groups, please consider age-appropriate immunizations during any and all points of contact with the health care system. This includes outpatient visits for urgent health issues, admissions to hospital, and home care.

Most routine vaccines, if delayed, can be given late and should be given at the earliest opportunity. One exception is rotavirus vaccine, which has a maximum age. Please consult vaccine monographs for additional information.

Ordering Vaccines

Vaccines can be ordered from WDGPH per the usual process. A Vaccine Order Form is available on our website and should be faxed to 519-823-4903.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC)

Health care providers should follow all recommendations regarding IPAC practices, including the appropriate use of PPE and appropriate disinfection practices. Further information is available on WDGPH's website.

Specific IPAC practices to consider during immunization include:

- Informing the parent/guardian at the time of booking that only one adult should accompany the child and other family members should remain at home.
- Pre-screening to ensure that ill children or accompanying adults stay home.
- Screening at the door to ensure anyone who has symptoms of respiratory illness is sent home and asked to rebook their appointment over the phone or via email.
- Posting information on clinic websites and using appropriate signage to communicate that patients should avoid coming to the clinic if they are feeling ill and should follow proper hand hygiene practices.
- If feasible, have a dedicated clinic time and space for immunizations, offered by appointment only.
- Avoid using the waiting room by screening, conducting the assessment, immunizing, and completing the 15-minute post-immunization wait in the same clinic room, and/or ensuring physical distancing measures in the waiting area.

For more information, refer to contact or website:

Name/Title: WDG Public Health, Physicians Call Centre

Contact: 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7011 / www.wdgpublichealth.ca