

Fall Respiratory Vaccination Recommendations

TO: York Region Long-Term Care and Retirement Home Directors of Care and Directors of Wellness
FROM: Infectious Diseases Control Division, York Region Public Health
RE: **Preparing for the Upcoming Respiratory Illness Season: Key Strategies to Prevent Outbreaks, and Reduce Outbreak Duration and Severity**

As we approach respiratory illness season, our shared priority is to support your home in reducing the risk and impact of potential outbreaks. Residents in long-term care and retirement homes are at increased risk of severe illness from respiratory infections, which makes prevention efforts particularly important.

Vaccination remains the most effective way to prevent infection and mitigate the severity of illness. Residents are prioritized for early access to publicly funded influenza, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines due to their heightened vulnerability. Ensuring that **eligible staff and residents** are vaccinated in a timely manner can significantly decrease the likelihood of outbreaks and reduce disruptions to care routines, administrative burden and operational pressure due to staffing shortages.

To support your outbreak prevention efforts, we recommend adopting the following strategies:

1. Streamlining the Vaccination Consent Process

- Obtain consent early to ensure readiness when vaccines become available in early fall
- Use a combined consent form for influenza and COVID-19 vaccines and one for RSV vaccines to simplify documentation and improve efficiency
- Obtain consent for vaccine types rather than specific brands (e.g., COVID-19 vaccine rather than Pfizer Comirnaty® or Moderna Spikevax®)
- Apply consent for the full respiratory season (e.g., Fall 2026 to Spring 2027), unless the resident or substitute decision-maker chooses to withdraw it
- ✓ **Early and consolidated consent collection helps prevent delays in vaccination and reduces administrative workload during peak periods**

2. Implementing Vaccine Co-administration

- Co-administration of influenza, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines is safe and encouraged, when appropriate
- When administering multiple vaccines at the same visit:
 - Use different limbs whenever possible
 - If using the same limb, ensure injection sites are at least 2.5 cm (1 inch) apart
 - Use separate needles and syringes for each vaccine
- ✓ **Co-administration reduces the need to schedule multiple clinics, helps to streamline operations, conserves staff time and resources and ensures readiness for respiratory illness season**

Updating your home's policies and procedures to incorporate these recommendations can:

- Improve vaccination uptake among eligible staff and residents
- Reduce the frequency, severity and duration of outbreaks
- Minimize disruption to care delivery
- Decrease administrative and logistical demands during respiratory illness season

For questions or support, speak to your facility's liaison or call the Control of Infectious Diseases and Outbreak Management Team at 905-830-4444 ext. 73588, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

