

April 8, 2022

To Our Patients and the Citizens of Huron and Perth,

As you are very aware, the last two years have been difficult for all of us. We have all been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in one way or another, and we are all looking forward to a day when we can finally say “it’s over”.

Unfortunately, we continue to see the daily number of COVID-19 cases climb, and we are now well into the sixth wave of this pandemic. We also expect, over the coming months, to see further waves in COVID-19 cases, which will continue to impact each and every one of us.

Fortunately, however, we are in a much better position than we were two years ago. We have a better understanding of how the SARS-CoV-2 virus is transmitted; a large proportion of our population has immunity to the virus; and we now have treatments that help decrease the chances of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19.

As physicians of Huron and Perth we strive to do everything we can to keep our patients and our communities healthy, and there are some things that we can all still do minimize the impacts of COVID-19.

Firstly, if you are sick, please stay home and isolate for 5 days as required. Even mild symptoms can be due to COVID-19 and should be treated as such. If you are not sure if you need to self-isolate, you can access the provincial screening tool at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>.

Secondly, in accordance with recommendations from Dr. Miriam Klassen and Huron Perth Public Health, we strongly support the continued use of masks in all indoor public spaces. Although the province of Ontario has lifted its mask mandate, we know that masks provide

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protection from and decrease the transmission of COVID-19. They also provide protection against the many other respiratory and gastrointestinal viruses that are currently circulating.

Thirdly, we know that the best protection against severe disease from COVID-19 is vaccination, including booster doses. We strongly recommend that everyone who is eligible for a booster dose get one. As of April 7<sup>th</sup>, adults over the age of 60 and those over the age of 18 who are immunocompromised are eligible for a second booster shot (i.e. a fourth dose of vaccine). The recommended interval between the first and second booster is 5 months, but can be as little as 84 days. For information on how to book a booster shot, please talk to your family doctor or visit [www.hpoh.ca](http://www.hpoh.ca). We encourage and welcome anyone who has questions about the value or timing of booster doses to contact their family physician to discuss them.

Finally, treatment of COVID-19 with anti-viral medication is available to those who are at high risk of severe disease, including but not limited to people over the age of 70, those who are unvaccinated, and those who are immunocompromised. However, this medication must be started within 5 days of symptom onset or a positive COVID-19 test. As such, it is very important for anyone who may qualify for treatment to be assessed as soon as possible. If you believe that you may qualify for anti-viral treatments, please contact your family physician or the HPHA COVID-19 Assessment Centre at <https://www.hpha.ca/covid19#accordion-46-1>.

As always, we remain committed to keeping our patients and communities healthy and safe, but we cannot do it alone. We are still all in this together, and with our ongoing joint effort we can continue to minimize the impacts of COVID-19.

Respectfully,

The Physician Advisory Council

Huron-Perth and Area Ontario Health Team

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