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October 6, 2023

## Seasonal Respiratory Illness Preparedness - Update for Residents

Dear Residents and Residents' Council Supporters,

Earlier this afternoon, our partners at the Ministry of Long-Term Care released an update to the sector to help homes prepare for the upcoming respiratory illness season. In a [memo](#) from Kelly McAslan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division, Ministry of Long-Term Care, she shares:

“We are anticipating a challenging respiratory illness season, with influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19 circulating over the fall and winter. The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) continues to work closely with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) to monitor and assess the risk of respiratory illness in homes and in the community. As we enter the respiratory illness season, it is recommended that homes continue to strengthen foundational Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices and be prepared to enhance measures should the province enter a high-risk or surge period of respiratory virus transmission.”

Discussions about the availability of vaccines and how to protect yourself and others might already be underway at your home. The following resources shared by the Ministry of Long-Term Care might be of interest to residents, and could spark further conversation:

- Assistant Deputy Minister Memo [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- Fact Sheet for Residents [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Standard for LTC homes [EN](#) | [FR](#)

Additional circulated resources include:

- Respiratory Illness Season Preparedness Checklist [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- COVID-19 Consent Form [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- Emergency Planning Attestation Form [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- LTC Flu testing program one-pager [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- PPE Supply Portal User Guide [EN](#) | [FR](#)

- Vaccination Posters – Everyone [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- Vaccination Posters – Staff [EN](#) | [FR](#)
- Fact Sheet – Staff & Visitors [EN](#) | [FR](#)

## Keep the Conversation Going!

This fall might be an excellent time for Residents' Councils to get to know the Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Lead in their home by inviting them to attend an upcoming Council meeting. This could give residents an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about vaccines, their availability, and anticipated distribution. Residents might also have questions about other common types of outbreaks and how they are managed in the home. A reminder that if you have specific questions about the vaccines or medications being offered to you, you always have the option to speak to your physician, nurse or IPAC Lead to feel more comfortable and confident.

Many Residents' Councils are unaware that their home's leadership team must consult with them when developing an Emergency Plan for the home. After all, it's YOUR home! If you haven't had an opportunity to learn about emergency planning and participate in discussions about home policies and practices designed to keep everyone safe and healthy, consider inviting your home Administrator/ Executive Director as a guest to your next Council meeting to provide an update. Administrators submit an annual [Attestation Form](#) to the Ministry as a compliance measure every year, to demonstrate that they have satisfied the legislative requirements around Emergency Plans, which include consultation with Residents' and Family Councils.

## Information Sessions with Ministry Guests: Mark your Calendars

Beginning next week, the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) will be hosting webinars for Administrators, Directors of Care, IPAC Leads, clinical/professional staff and Medical Directors about resources to support long-term care homes' readiness for the upcoming respiratory illness season.

Following these sector webinars, residents will have their own opportunity to receive an update and have their questions answered. OARC looks forward to hosting Ministry guests for information sessions about seasonal respiratory illness preparedness on November 1<sup>st</sup> (English) and November 2<sup>nd</sup> (French):

- **Information Session for Residents with Ministry Guests: Respiratory Illness Preparedness Update** – November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2pm EST. Pre-register [here](#).
- **Information Session for Residents and Families: Respiratory Illness Preparedness Update (French)** – November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:30am EST. Pre-register [here](#). Note: This session will be delivered in French.

## Communicating With Residents

Proactive, ongoing communication will be of utmost importance this respiratory illness season to keep residents feeling safe and well-informed. OARC recommends that every long-term home consider using OARC's customizable Communication tool to support this ongoing communication. Available in both [English](#) and [French](#), this template can be tailored to the needs and preferences of residents in your home. It can be posted, used as a hand-out, and it can help supplement any verbal updates that residents might already be receiving. Tips for using the Communication tool can be found [here](#).

Consider reviewing OARC's tool at a future Residents' Council meeting to see if it could be a good fit for your home and make suggestions for how it might be adapted to work for you! When residents are invited to provide feedback about how they wish to receive information and updates, this can help to strengthen relationships and enhance communication in your home.

## Supporting Continuity for your Council

Don't let outbreaks disrupt the continuity of your Council Meetings!

To help you navigate periods of outbreak and home area co-horting, OARC has developed some [guidance and strategies](#) and a companion [question and answer document](#) to help Residents' Councils stay connected. **Wherever possible, Residents' Council meetings should not be cancelled;** instead, try to explore ways to adapt your meeting format. If residents are unable to come together for a whole home meeting, and technology or small home area meetings are not available to you, consider working with your Residents' Council Assistant to collect resident feedback on a 1:1 basis, or create a mobile Residents' Council cart containing copies of home updates, the Residents' Bill of Rights and forms to capture resident feedback. OARC also has created a Fact Sheet with ideas for facilitating [Residents' Council Elections during outbreaks](#) to minimize disruptions for your Council.

What creative strategies has your Council used to stay connected when your home is experiencing extended periods of outbreak? We invite you to bring your ideas to a [Resident Forum](#) or [Residents' Council Assistant Forum](#) this month OR share with Melissa McVie, Director of Communications at [mmcvie@ontarc.com](mailto:mmcvie@ontarc.com).