



October 2023

1. ***Flu shots***
2. ***COVID boosters***
3. ***RSV vaccines***
4. ***Viral infections 2023***

Dear Patients,

We hope this letter finds you well. Please take the time to review this newsletter carefully... as we prepare to dive into another Cough, Cold & Flu season!

FLU SHOTS

Flu vaccine shipments for the 2023-24 season have been going out from Toronto Public Health to Primary Care Providers in recent days, and will continue over the coming weeks. At Generations, we are ready to begin providing flu shots where appropriate and are planning for our regular Flu Shot Clinics once again as well.

Once our clinic is adequately stocked with vaccine supply, we will announce times/dates for Flu Shot Clinics in our office. Our expectation is that our Flu Clinics will likely occur in late October or (more likely) early November, as we have typically done in the past. Please note that early vaccination is primarily intended only for people who are at high risk of flu-related complications, hospitalizations, or high risk for spreading infection (health care workers); for many, late October-early November is a very reasonable time to target vaccination.

As our office is quite busy right now, we ask that at present patients do NOT schedule appointments for the primary purpose of getting a flu shot. As in past years, flu shots will eventually be widely available at many pharmacies once again as well.

If you do receive a flu shot somewhere other than our office, especially if you are 65 and older, we strongly encourage you to let us know so we can update your chart accordingly!



COVID BOOSTERS

Just as we require annual flu shots to better target the strains of influenza that we expect to encounter each year, it seems that COVID presents a frequently moving target to our defenses— such that updated boosters may continue to be advisable for the foreseeable future.

As many of you know, new COVID booster shots have recently been approved by Health Canada. These new boosters better target the variants of the virus that are now circulating. It is anticipated that these new boosters will soon become available at pharmacies and vaccination centres in the coming days and weeks as well.

If it has been 6 months since you last had a COVID booster or 6 months since you have recovered from COVID infection, it is reasonable to consider getting a new booster shot. While we do recommend that most of our patients get boosted, a reminder that we do NOT stock COVID-19 vaccines in our clinic. We recommend scheduling an appointment at a vaccine centre or pharmacy: [Where to Get Vaccinated](#).

RSV VACCINES

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is a relatively common virus that can infect the lungs and respiratory tracts. While it typically results in mild symptoms like a Cold, it can also cause more serious infections, particularly in higher risk patients like infants and older adults with chronic health conditions.

Arexvy is a new RSV vaccine that has recently been approved for use in Canada to prevent more serious infection/hospitalization caused by RSV in adults 60+. While the National Advisory Committee on Immunizations (NACI) continues to review the vaccine and will be providing specific recommendations, it is now available for use.

At GFHC we do now have a limited supply of Arexvy in our office for eligible patients interested in getting vaccinated. Arexvy is not covered by OHIP, and costs \$275 for one shot; we have been told that most extended health insurance plans are expected to cover it.



ADULT VACCINATIONS

Current recommendations (Ontario Health: [Vaccines for Adults](#))

As an adult you should receive the following free vaccines (covered by OHIP):

- tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (once in adulthood; once in every pregnancy)
- tetanus, diphtheria (every 10 years)
- flu shot (every fall)
- pneumococcal (Pneumovax 23, at age 65)
- shingles (between age 65 to 70)

In addition, the following vaccinations may be advisable (although not necessarily covered by OHIP):

- Shingles - eligible >50 or high-risk/immunocompromised at any age
- Pneumococcal (Prevnar 20)
 - Adults 65 years of age and over
 - Adults 50 to 64 years of age living with factors that place them at higher risk of pneumococcal disease
 - Adults 18 to 49 years of age with immunocompromising conditions
- RSV (Arexvy) - eligible >60

VIRAL INFECTIONS 2023

With cough & cold season already well under way, we thought it would once again be helpful to share some information and tips on ways to safely manage common respiratory infections and influenza-like illnesses at home.

Viral Infections:

- Common Cold or Flu: lasts 7-14 days
- Acute Pharyngitis (sore throat): lasts 3-7 days
- Acute bronchitis (chest cold): lasts 7-21 days
- Acute sinusitis (sinus infection): lasts 7-14 days
- COVID-19: lasts 5-14 days

When you have a viral infection you should:

- Rest as much as possible
- Drink plenty of fluids



- Wash your hands frequently and stay home
- Take over-the-counter medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever, aches or sore throat

Home COVID testing - If you have access to a COVID-19 rapid test (RAT), please follow the instructions below to test yourself:

1. Insert the swab tip between inner cheek and lower gum and turn the swab a few times. Repeat on the other side.
2. Then, rub the swab tip on your tongue and as far back in your throat as is comfortable.
3. Tilt your head back and using the same swab, fully insert the swab straight back into your nose until you hit resistance. Rotate several times and let it sit for a few seconds. Repeat on the other side.
4. Remove and place swab into the test tube following the kit instructions.

Paxlovid - If you have COVID-19 and are 65 or older or are immunocompromised, you are likely eligible for Paxlovid. Paxlovid is meant to decrease the chance of severe illness or hospitalization. While your physician can prescribe Paxlovid, you can also obtain it from your pharmacist without a physician's prescription. Paxlovid should be taken within the first few days of symptoms to be effective. (Ontario Health: [What You Need To Know About Paxlovid](#))

Antibiotics - Antibiotics are not effective in treating viral infections (see: Choosing Wisely Canada: [Using Antibiotics Wisely](#)). Antibiotics can cause side effects (e.g. diarrhea, yeast infections) and may cause harms such as severe diarrhea, allergic reactions, kidney or liver injury.

Please contact our office for an appointment if:

- Symptoms are not improving in the above expected time or worsening at any time
- You have a child with a fever for 4 or more days, or at any time with a child 6 months or younger
- You have emphysema or chronic bronchitis, asthma or other underlying medical issues that put you more at risk

At any time if you are having shortness of breath or chest pain, you should go to your nearest Emergency Room.

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