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LOCAL : NEWS

Health unit survey requests residents' input as to how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected them

By **This Week**

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Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been no shortage of online comments regarding how it has impacted people. The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit hopes area residents will also share courtesy of a survey in which individuals are being asked how the pandemic has affected their physical, social, mental and financial health. The survey also asks respondents about their actions and attitudes toward pandemic measures, including vaccination, mask use, physical distancing and more.

Survey results will be used by the health unit and other organizations to more effectively respond to the current and lasting effects of COVID-19 in the area. This includes developing evidence-based services and programs that support public health.

The COVID-19 survey is open to residents 18 and older in Haliburton and Northumberland counties and Kawartha Lakes. People can take part in the survey by clicking on the 'Tell Us How COVID-19 Has Affected You' link at the health unit's website www.hkpr.on.ca.

"We know the pandemic has affected individuals and families in our communities," says Andrew Harris, an epidemiologist with the local health unit. "This survey is intended to dig deeper into COVID's impact locally, and that's why we urge everyone to share their thoughts."

The health unit's survey is confidential, anonymous, takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, and can be accessed until mid-December. The survey is similar to one conducted last fall by the health unit. In that survey, the health unit received nearly 2,000 responses.

The 2021 survey's question on vaccine is updated slightly to reflect current availability, but the rest of the survey remains the same as in 2020. This means it will serve as a good year-over-year comparison, Harris says.

"As the pandemic progresses, these surveys help to show us how people's attitudes and actions have evolved over time," he adds.

Gathering information through public surveys is not new for the health unit.

For almost two decades, the health unit has been participating in the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance (RRFSS) survey conducted on its behalf by the Institute for Social Research at York University. The health unit uses the local RRFSS results to plan programs and improve its services. The COVID-19 online survey is part of RRFSS.

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