

## **Increase in COVID-19 cases forces health unit to make changes to clinics and contact tracing**

*By This WeekWed., Dec. 15, 2021timer2 min. read*

### **Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit no longer accepting walk-ins at vaccination clinics and suspends non-COVID programming**



The local health unit is adjusting some of its COVID-19 response processes in light of a recent spike in area cases.

According to Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit medical officer of health Dr. Natalie Bocking, increasing case numbers have stretched the capacity of the health unit staff and changes are necessary to balance the work involved with new cases while continuing to offer mass immunization clinics in the communities.

Since Friday (Dec. 10), the health unit has been notified of 56 confirmed cases of residents in the region and investigating six community COVID-19 outbreaks.

“We are having to make some changes to ensure we have staff coverage in the areas most impacted right now,” states Dr. Bocking. “With the expansion of the eligibility for booster doses and the identification of the Omicron variant in the province, we are seeing a high demand at our clinics. This, coupled with the surge in cases we have seen recently, has forced us to do things a little differently.”

As a result, the following changes are being made:

- **Mass immunization clinics:** As of Thursday (Dec. 16) walk-ins will no longer be accepted at clinics, however, additional appointments are being added. Residents are strongly encouraged to book an appointment for their first, second and third (booster) dose of vaccine through the provincial online booking system <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/> or by calling [1-833-943-3900](tel:1-833-943-3900) (TTY [1-866-797-0007](tel:1-866-797-0007)). Third doses are also available through participating local pharmacies or primary health care providers.

- **High-risk contacts:** Anyone identified as a high-risk contact of a confirmed case in a school setting will now receive a letter outlining quarantine and testing requirements. Health unit staff will continue to directly contact individuals who are confirmed cases. Information for high-risk contacts is available at [www.hkpr.on.ca](http://www.hkpr.on.ca).

- **Non-COVID programming:** This includes pausing sexual health clinics, no-doctor vaccination clinics for children, Healthy Babies Healthy Children programming and some inspection services, as staff have been redeployed back to clinics or case investigation.

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While she understands that everyone is tired of COVID-19 and looking forward to the holidays, Dr. Bocking urges people to opt for smaller celebrations and continue to follow public health practices including staying home if ill, physical distancing, masking and hand washing. Individuals are also encouraged to get vaccinated to help protect themselves, their families and their communities from further spread of the virus.