


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LOCAL : NEWS

Health unit adds appointments to clinics for the remainder of December

Changes to clinic schedules and redeployment of staff necessary to respond to surges in COVID-19 cases, especially the highly transmissible Omicron variant

By **This Week**

Wed., Dec. 22, 2021 |  3 min. read

The local health unit is making changes to its clinic schedules and processes in response to a recent surge in COVID-19 cases and direction from the province.

With the provincial government's expansion of third dose eligibility – since Dec. 20, all residents 18 and older are eligible to book a third dose appointment as long as it has been 84 days since their second dose – the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit has made a number of changes to accommodate the jump in demand for vaccinations from local residents.

An additional 6,500 appointments have been added to health unit led clinics for the remainder of December.

As of Tuesday (Dec. 21) the health unit has worked with its primary care partners to extend clinics at the Cobourg Community Centre from 6 to 9 p.m. This will continue until the end of the month, excluding Dec. 24, 25, 26 and 31.

Additional clinics have also been added to the clinic at the Lindsay Exhibition and at the Haliburton Legion; the latter being on Dec. 23 and 30.

Beginning in January, both the Cobourg Community Centre and Lindsay Exhibition clinics will be running seven days per week.

In order to move more staff to support the work at vaccination clinics, the health unit has had to redeploy staff to vaccination clinics.

Effective immediately, the health unit will:

- provide a letter to confirmed COVID cases so they can notify their high-risk contacts (HRCs). The letter will contain details on isolation, Section 22 Class order and testing recommendations.
- no longer declare COVID outbreaks in community settings (ie: hockey teams, restaurants). Outbreaks will continue to be declared in high-risk congregate settings including long-term care homes, retirement homes, shelters, group homes, schools, childcare centres, hospitals and other settings where there is a risk of ongoing exposure.
- no longer complete high-risk contact tracing follow-up, with the exception of those affiliated with a congregate/institutional outbreak or a high-risk congregate setting.

It is important to note that household members of cases will be asked to self-isolate regardless of their vaccination status. High-risk contacts who are not household members of a case and are fully vaccinated and asymptomatic do not need to isolate.

“We are pleased to see so many of our residents seeking their first, second and third dose of vaccine for COVID-19,” says HKPR medical officer of health Dr. Natalie Bocking. “Some people may be experiencing challenges in getting an appointment and we want to assure them that we are doing everything we can to get the vaccine to as many people as possible throughout our region. This includes following provincial guidance on cast and contact tracing and moving as many of our staff as possible into clinics

to provide vaccinations.”

Appointments for any of the health unit’s vaccination clinics must be booked through the provincial booking system (covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine). Residents can also call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at [1-833-943-3900](tel:1-833-943-3900) (TTY for people who are deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired: [1-866-797-0007](tel:1-866-797-0007)). People are encouraged to keep checking the provincial booking system as more appointments continue to be added.

People can also contact their local pharmacy or their primary care provider to see if vaccines are being provided. A list of mass immunization clinic locations and dates is available on the Health Unit’s website at www.hkpr.on.ca.

Even when fully vaccinated, Dr. Bocking urges people to continue to follow public health recommendations: This means staying home if ill, getting vaccinated - including getting a booster dose when possible - physical distancing, keeping holiday get togethers small and safe, masking, frequent and thorough hand washing, and following provincial gathering limits of 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors.

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