



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

For Immediate Release

(Pembroke, Ontario, December 15, 2023)

RCDHU Urges Residents to Take Precautions Against Respiratory Illness this Holiday Season

As the holiday season approaches and holiday gatherings increase, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) is alerting residents that respiratory viruses like the flu, RSV, and COVID-19 continue to circulate at high levels in our community. RCDHU urges residents to take precautions to reduce the spread of illness and protect those who are at higher risk in our communities, including older adults, young children, and those with certain medical conditions.

RCDHU monitors [respiratory virus activity](#) in Renfrew County and District. Current indicators show **very high and increasing levels** of respiratory illness, including an increase in facility outbreaks, emergency department visits, and hospital admissions.

"Local respiratory illness activity is very high right now. This is a festive time of year, and we want everyone to have a happy and healthy holiday season. We are urging residents to take precautions to reduce the spread of illness by using those layers of protection that we know are effective," states Dr. Morgenstern, Medical Officer of Health for RCDHU.

This holiday season, RCDHU asks residents to enjoy safer celebrations by using the following layers of protection:

- Keep your vaccinations up to date, including your annual flu shot and the most recent COVID-19 vaccine you are eligible for. It is not too late to be vaccinated, but it should be done as soon as possible to provide protection during holiday gatherings, as our immune systems take 10-14 days to respond to immunization.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Improve indoor air quality and ventilation by increasing your HVAC fan circulation, using an air filtration system like a HEPA filter, and opening a window/door when possible.
- Wear a mask when recovering from illness and visiting high risk settings like long-term care homes and hospitals. Also, consider wearing a mask in any crowded indoor space.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or use hand rub containing at least 60% alcohol, and avoid touching your face with unclean hands.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects frequently.

Antiviral treatment is available for those at higher risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19. Learn more by visiting Ontario's: [COVID-19 Testing and Treatment](#).

For more information on respiratory illnesses, please visit RCDHU's [Respiratory Illnesses: Flu, RSV, COVID-19](#). To find local respiratory illness data, please visit RCDHU's [Respiratory Illness Data Summary](#).

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