

Preparations for the 2024-2025 Respiratory Virus Season

Toronto Board of Health

October 21, 2024

2024-2025 Respiratory Virus Season

- Many respiratory viruses increase in the fall and winter
- Viruses such as **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**, **Influenza**, **COVID-19** can produce **serious illness** particularly in vulnerable individuals (e.g. elderly, very young, those with underlying medical conditions)
- **Vaccines** for RSV, Influenza and COVID-19 are the best way of protecting against these diseases
- **2024:** Infants and pregnant people are eligible for publicly funded RSV vaccine
- TPH works collaboratively to develop and implement fall outbreak preparedness activities



TPH has prepared for the 2024/25 respiratory season

TPH is focusing on:

- Providing public information on how people can protect themselves against infection
- Tracking virus activity to alert the public when the risk of infection is elevated so that people can reduce their risk
- Supporting places where vulnerable people live such as shelters and long-term care homes to respond to outbreaks and ensure residents are vaccinated
- Providing influenza and COVID-19 vaccine for young children 6 months to 4 years of age
- Coordinating vaccine orders from hospitals and health care providers

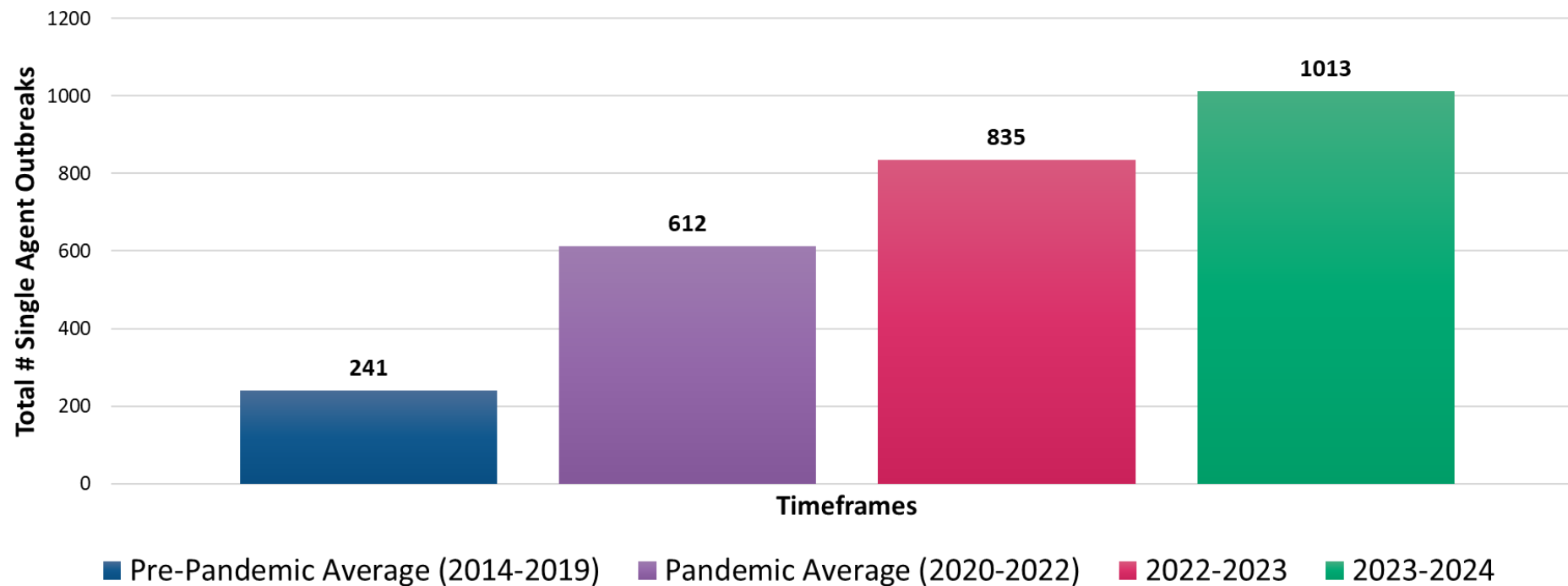


How to reduce your risk of infection this season

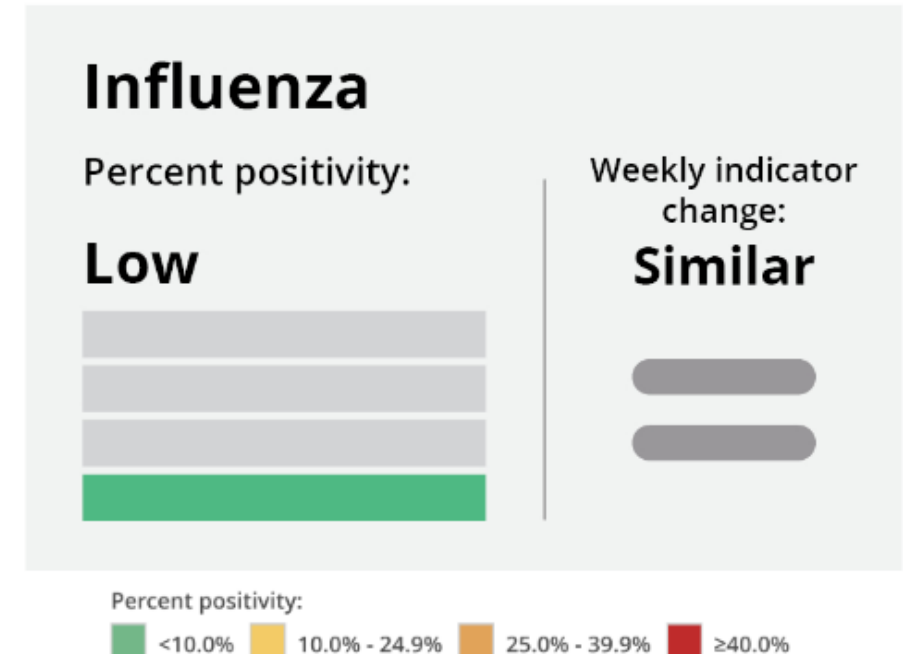
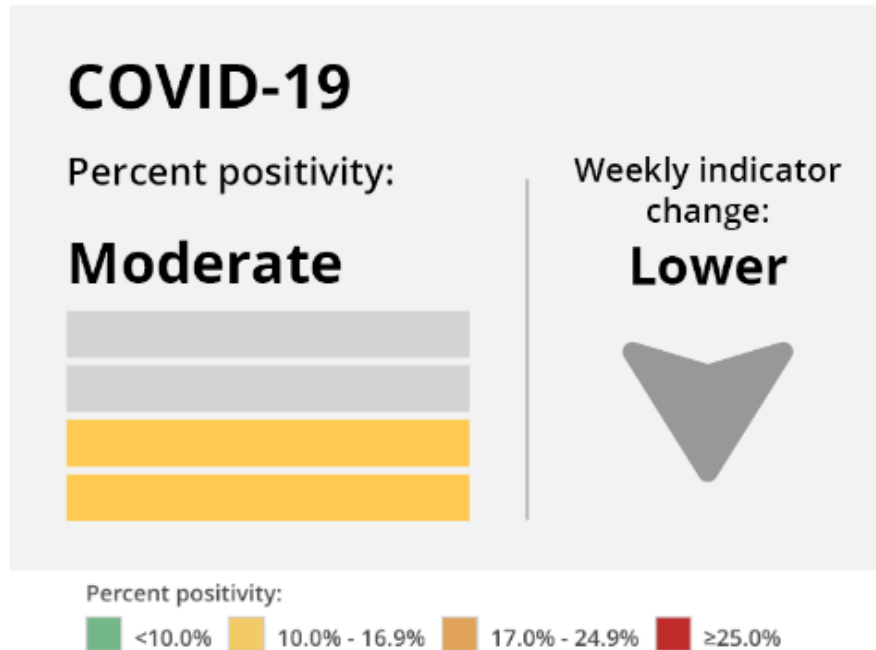
- Get vaccinated – effective vaccines exist for COVID-19, influenza and RSV
- Stay home when you are sick to reduce the spread of infection in our community
- Wash your hands often and especially when returning home from your day
- Consider wearing a mask when in crowded indoor spaces where ventilation may be poor
- Cough into your sleeve or a tissue to reduce the spread of viruses

Activity was high in 23/24 outbreak season: higher than the pre-pandemic and pandemic average

2023-24 season respiratory outbreaks comparison to pre, pandemic, & 2022-2023 respiratory outbreaks



Respiratory virus activity remains stable, but is expected to increase



*Data from September 29, 2024 – October 5 Ontario Respiratory Virus Tools

- Activity in the southern hemisphere in 2024 continued to be higher than pre-pandemic times, but not as high as 2023
- Toronto has seen an increase in COVID-19 activity starting late summer
- Ontario has cancelled its wastewater surveillance, but the federal government is still testing Toronto wastewater and TPH is evaluating how to use the data to inform activities

TPH is returning to routine fall respiratory response

- Vaccines can be accessed at over 500 pharmacies across Toronto
 - TPH mobile vaccine teams will focus on shelters and underhoused
- No seasonality for COVID-19 and ongoing spread through the year with more peaks in the fall/winter
- TPH's Wastewater Dashboard paused on July 31 following the halt of the provincial Wastewater Surveillance Initiative
- TPH collaborates with IPAC Hubs to enhance respiratory outbreak preparedness in hospitals, long-term care, retirement homes and shelters, by providing guidance, resources, vaccine information, and ongoing outbreak management support

TPH supports outbreak preparedness and responses

TPH plans to support outbreak responses in long-term care homes, shelters, and health care settings by:



Distributing outbreak preparedness tool kits, vaccines, and ministry guidance



Ensuring best practices are followed in settings like long-term care and retirement homes



Helping with outbreak management



Providing health professionals with information to protect themselves and their patients

Where to get vaccinated for COVID-19

- Interval: At least 6 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine or infection; minimum 3 months
- In the fall, individuals can receive their COVID-19 vaccines at some health care provider offices, [select pharmacies](#)
- TPH clinics only for young children (6 months of 4 years of age), and at homeless/underhoused clinics
- Can safely get the COVID-19, influenza & RSV vaccine at the same time



Find the nearest pharmacy [online](#) or make an appointment with your primary healthcare provider

Eligibility for RSV vaccine is expanding

- RSV is a major cause of lower respiratory illness affecting the lungs and airways, particularly among infants, young children, and older adults
- Individuals are most likely to get infected when the virus is most active
 - RSV season in Canada is generally from November to April

Vaccination populations:

- **Adults 60+ in Long-Term Care & Elder Care Lodges:** Second year of publicly funded RSV vaccine program
- **New this year:** Expansion to include residents of retirement homes aged 60+
- **Pregnant individuals:** Option to receive RSV vaccine between 32-36 weeks gestation to protect their newborns
- **Infants & high-risk children:** Administered before newborn is discharged from hospitals

Vaccination remains the most effective tool for prevention

Vaccine	Population	Where to Get Vaccinated
COVID-19	High-risk populations General population *October 28*	Pharmacy, healthcare settings, primary care providers, congregate living settings
Influenza	High-risk populations General population *October 28*	Pharmacy, healthcare settings, primary care providers, congregate living settings
RSV	Older adults	Healthcare settings, primary care providers, congregate living settings
RSV	Pregnant people Infant <24 months	Healthcare settings, primary care providers

Some vaccines may be offered in other settings serving high-risk populations such as Indigenous serving clinics, birthing centres, etc.

Thank you

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