

# First dose vaccinations expanded to additional priority groups

Posted March 01, 2021

**Huron-Perth, ON** – With increased vaccine supply in the region, and guidance from the Province, Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH), the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), and Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) will expand eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination to additional priority groups identified in the first Phase of Ontario’s Vaccination Plan.

Starting today, the three health units are expanding eligibility to include community members who are 80 years of age and older and Indigenous adults who are 55 years of age and older.

“In addition to long-term care and retirement home residents, staff and essential caregivers, and an expanded list of prioritized healthcare, we are very pleased to begin including community members over the age of 80 as well as Indigenous adults 55 and older,” says Dr. Miriam Klassen, Medical Officer of Health at Huron Perth Public Health. “Expanding vaccine eligibility means we can continue to build a wall of protection around our most vulnerable community members.”

In order to accommodate these groups from the general public, HPPH will be opening a public booking system (online and telephone) in the days ahead. Clinics will begin early to mid-March and continue for several weeks.

If you have a loved one who is 80 years old or older, please inform them that booking links and details will soon be announced for Huron-Perth. When booking opens for those aged 80 and older, we will be communicating this information widely through our webpage, print, radio, local news, and social media. You can also call us at 1-888-221-2133, press 1 (one) for COVID-19 vaccine, and listen to our regularly updated vaccine information. **Please do not call your primary care provider or pharmacy for further information.**

Healthcare workers in provincially prioritized groups will also be able to start getting their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Among the groups now eligible to receive the vaccine are:

- Staff and essential caregivers in long-term care homes, high-risk retirement homes and First Nations elder care homes, and any residents of these settings that have not yet received a first dose of vaccine.
- Alternative level of care patients in hospitals who have a confirmed admission to a long-term care home, retirement home or other congregate care home for seniors.
- Frontline healthcare workers working in hospital inpatient settings and hospital procedural areas, including surgical care, obstetrics, endoscopy, operating rooms, dialysis, imaging, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. Other ambulatory and out-patient care areas are not included at this time. Residents and staff in other congregate care settings for seniors, including assisted living facilities.
- Hospital and acute care healthcare workers in frontline roles with COVID-19 patients and/or with a high-risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Patient-facing healthcare workers involved in the COVID-19 response.
- Medical First Responders
- Patient-facing community healthcare workers serving specialized populations (such as Needle exchange/syringe programs, home and community care healthcare workers)
- Residents and staff in other congregate care settings for seniors, including assisted living facilities.

For a full list of all healthcare workers and sectors currently eligible for a first-dose, visit: <https://www.hpph.ca/en/health-matters/covid-19-vaccine-information.aspx>.

Healthcare workers will receive booking directions from their employer. Additional information on how healthcare workers can preregister for an appointment will be available shortly.

Since December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, more than 30,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to eligible individuals within the region. Vaccination eligibility will be expanded as Ontario moves to the second and third Phases of the Provincial Vaccination Plan. The Provincial government has estimated that Phase two may begin as early as March, with plans to extend vaccination to more cohorts in the senior population. To learn more about Provincially-Prioritized groups, visit [Guidance for Prioritizing Health Care Workers for COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

**For information, visit:**

- [www.hpph.ca/vaccine](http://www.hpph.ca/vaccine)
- [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus)
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