

October 21, 2024

Dear parents and caregivers,

As a parent or caregiver, your child's health and safety are a top priority. I want to take this opportunity to share some important information with you to help keep all children healthy throughout the school year.

## Routine childhood vaccination

In Ontario, all children going to school need to be vaccinated against certain diseases. The vaccines are publicly funded and offered at no cost to eligible individuals. Recently, there has been an increase in cases of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, both in KFL&A and across the province. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent the spread of pertussis and protect your child from many diseases.

### What can you do?

**Check your child's vaccine record:** compare the records you have with the *Immunization through the Lifespan* handout attached. This handout also explains how to report your child's vaccines.

**Report your child's vaccines to KFL&A Public Health:** it is possible that your child is up-to-date on their vaccines, but KFL&A Public Health is not aware. Your healthcare provider is not required to report your child's vaccinations to public health. For more information on reporting vaccines, visit [kflaph.ca/ImmunizationReporting](http://kflaph.ca/ImmunizationReporting)

**If your child needs a vaccine:** If your child does not have access to a regular healthcare provider, you can book a vaccine appointment at KFL&A Public Health. For more information about our clinics visit, [kflaph.ca/ImmunizationClinics](http://kflaph.ca/ImmunizationClinics).

## Fall vaccines (flu, COVID-19 and RSV) and respiratory illness season

We expect this fall and winter to be challenging with many respiratory viruses circulating at the same time – like influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19. It is important to think ahead and be prepared for respiratory illness season. This is why I am sharing two important handouts to help you in the months ahead:

1. The ***Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms*** handout, by the Ontario College of Family Physicians, provides practical advice to help you if your child gets sick. It offers guidance on managing symptoms at home and knowing when and where to seek medical help.
2. The ***About Respiratory Illness*** handout will help you understand how to protect your family from viruses, reduce their spread, manage symptoms, and find information on treatment.

Staying up to date with fall vaccinations remains the most effective defense against many respiratory infections. Ensure everyone in your family gets the annual flu shot, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines for

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### Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health

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which they are eligible. The flu and COVID-19 vaccines are currently available for high-risk groups, including those over 65, pregnant individuals, and for children 6 months to 4 years of age, as well as for First Nations, Inuit, Métis, racialized communities, and those at high-risk of complications from respiratory illness. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines will be more widely available to the general population on Oct. 28. It is safe and convenient to receive the COVID-19 and flu vaccinations at the same time, reducing the need for multiple visits to a doctor, nurse practitioner or local pharmacy.

This year, more people are eligible for the RSV vaccine, including older adults, infants, and pregnant individuals. To find out if you're eligible, speak with your health-care provider or contact our Immunization Team at 613-549-1232, ext. 1451.

KFL&A Public Health is focusing efforts on administering flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines to children under the age of 5 who do not have access to primary care. All other eligible recipients can access these vaccines through local participating pharmacies, your primary care provider, specialist clinics or other community services depending on the specific vaccine.

Thank you for taking the time to read this important information and taking the next steps to help protect you and your family this respiratory illness season. Staying up to date on routine vaccinations, getting your flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines for which you are eligible this fall, and following important public health measures, like hand washing and staying home when sick, will help protect you, your family, and others in our community.



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