



Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH) Statement

November 15, 2022

In light of the remarks from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health yesterday, PCMCH echoes the strong recommendation for masking in all indoor public settings, including schools and childcare settings, and vaccination as a defence against respiratory infections. The acute surge of respiratory viral infections in the province is placing immense strain on our healthcare system and communities. We must collectively take responsibility to alleviate those pressures and protect everyone, including children and pregnant people.

Ontario's hospitals, including our children's and community hospitals, are experiencing unprecedented pressures with increasing rates of respiratory infections like [respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\)](#), [COVID-19](#) and [influenza](#). We must all do our part to reduce the surge of children and youth coming to emergency rooms and to ease the pressures in paediatric ICUs and inpatient wards, which are over-capacity. Young children, especially under five years of age, are more susceptible to respiratory viruses, which are known to be transmitted by both adults and children.

Masking is one layer of protection. PCMCH urges all members of the public to layer protections, as we are currently facing the triple threat of COVID-19, influenza and RSV circulating in Ontario. It is critically important to continue to keep ourselves and others safe and healthy by:

- ✓ Wearing a mask in indoor public settings
- ✓ Staying up to date with vaccinations (COVID-19 & flu)
- ✓ Screening daily for respiratory symptoms
- ✓ Staying home when sick
- ✓ Washing hands regularly and cleaning high-touch surfaces regularly

COVID-19 infection in pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of preterm birth, pre-eclampsia, stillbirth and neonatal death. Flu virus infection during pregnancy is associated with preterm birth and low birth weight. Vaccination against flu and COVID-19 are associated with a reduction in these adverse outcomes. Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations are safe and effective before or during pregnancy and while breastfeeding, and are strongly recommended.

When layered, these protective measures can help curb transmission of respiratory viruses, reduce severity of illness, and protect Ontarians, while also safeguarding healthcare system capacity.

Sincerely,

Bruce Squires, Chair

Sanober Diaz, Executive Director

On behalf of PCMCH's Governing Council



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