

IPAC HUB

NEWSLETTER Fall 2022

in this issue

Prepare for Cold & Flu Season

Spotlight on iGAS

Maximize Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation



Fall brings with it beautiful foliage, crisp air and the dreaded cold and flu season. Our Algoma Public Health Infection Protection and Control hub team is here to support and help you plan and prepare for infections and outbreaks within your facility.

*How can we help you and your IPAC program?
Please reach out to us at
ipachub@algomapublichealth.com*

We are excited to launch our local communities of practice.

Thank you to everyone who filled in our survey. This information will help us plan how best to connect and meet your needs.

Outbreak activity



Stay up to date with ongoing institutional outbreak activity in the Algoma District by visiting our [current outbreak activity](#) on our website.

Prepare for Cold & Flu Season



- [Screening](#) staff, visitors and residents remains an important measure in preventing spread of illness and outbreaks.



- Stay up to date on your [COVID-19 vaccination](#). All Ontarians aged 18 and over are encouraged to stay up to date with their vaccinations and get a bivalent booster dose at a recommended interval of six months after their last dose, as evidence shows that vaccine protection decreases over time. Learn more about [eligibility for those 6 months to 17 years of age](#).



- Get your annual [flu shot](#). Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu shot as it is your best defence about the flu.



- Encourage staff and visitors to stay home when feeling sick.



- Encourage those visiting and living in your facility to practice good hand hygiene.



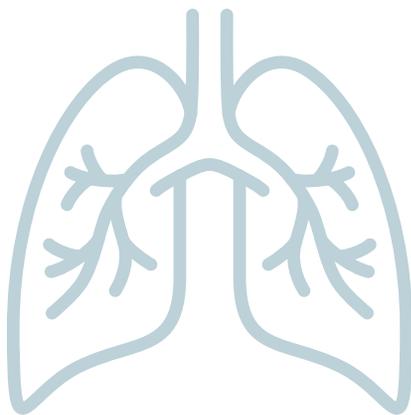
- Maintain your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. Use portable air filters.

Respiratory Virus Overview in Ontario

This new [surveillance report](#) from Public Health Ontario provides a weekly assessment of respiratory virus activity in Ontario, and summarizes surveillance information from various sources used to monitor influenza, COVID-19, and other seasonal respiratory viruses in Ontario.

The [COVID-19 Data Tool](#) has also been updated with a new tab entitled "COVID-19 & Flu Activity", which will include images and select figures from the new report, and will provide a high-level assessment of COVID-19 and Influenza activity in Ontario.

Sample data that is available in these documents include the number of COVID-19 tests completed and the percent positive by surveillance week.



Spotlight on invasive Group A Streptococcus (iGAS)

We often see an increase in cases in the fall months. These bacteria can cause a variety of illnesses from relatively mild sore throats (strep throat) or skin infection (e.g. impetigo) to life threatening invasive infections. Hand hygiene, keeping open sores / wounds covered and antibiotic treatment for infections can minimize risk of spread within facilities.

When treating with an antibiotic, it is very important to complete the full antibiotic course. Exclude any staff member with a Group A Strep infection from work until 24 hours after first dose of antibiotics. Infected residents should be isolated to their room for 24 hours after antibiotics are started.

Maximizing Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation

Ventilation plays an important role in reducing the transmission of virus, including **COVID-19**, indoors. Outbreaks have been linked to poor ventilation in a variety of indoor settings. Routine maintenance of your Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning system by qualified professionals is essential.

In areas where ventilation is poor, portable air filtration devices with high-efficiency particulate air filters have been shown to reduce the concentration of some viruses from the air. To select the right air filtration device, it is important to consult an experienced professional to:

- Assist in identifying ventilation needs.
- Establish the steps for proper maintenance.
- Ensure that the unit has a high enough clean air delivery rate and,
- Is installed properly.

When in use, ensure that the air released by the device is not blown directly at individuals as it can increase the spread of droplets. These units need to be maintained. Ensure you refer to the manufacturer's instructions for operation and maintenance.



Humidity plays an important role because it can impact how long virus particles are suspended in the air. It is recommended to maintain an optimal humidity level of between 30% and 50% in indoor settings.

For additional guidance and recommendations please see:

- [Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Systems in Buildings and **COVID-19**](#)
- [Use of Portable Air Cleaners and Transmission of **COVID-19**](#)

Updates from Public Health Ontario

[Activities to Support Infection Prevention and Control Practices in Congregate Living Settings](#)

14 engaging, hands-on activities that address key areas of IPAC practice in congregate settings. Each activity provides information about why the practice is important as well as practical ideas about how to strengthen IPAC culture are provided. These activities are examples that can be used as they're described, or you can tailor them to the unique aspects of your setting.

[Infection Prevention and Control – Online Learning](#)

Public Health Ontario has a variety of education resources targeted at different health care settings and practices available through their Learning Management System (LMS) or through our website.

[Orientation for Infection Prevention and Control Leads in Long-Term Care](#)

This page provides both new and experienced IPAC Leads with dedicated resources and guidance to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities to support their professional growth and improve their organization's IPAC programs.

Whether you are new to your IPAC Lead role or have been supporting your long-term care home for some time, these resources are designed to support your professional growth from the time you enter the role through completion of a formal IPAC training program.

[Public Health Ontario Infection Prevention and Control Course for Non-Clinical Staff.](#)

This great resource was designed specifically for people who do not have formal health care training and work in a congregate living environment. It will provide learners with the IPAC knowledge they need to keep themselves, their clients and their co-workers safe from infections in workplaces like shelters, group homes, residential treatment centres and other facilities.

COVID-19 Resources

Long-Term Care Home / Retirement Homes

[COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units](#)

[Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility COVID-19 Guidance Document for Retirement Homes in Ontario](#)

[Screening Tool for Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes](#)

[COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario](#)

[Minister's Directive: COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes](#)

[COVID-19 Test Requisition](#)

[Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Consent and Notice Form](#)



Congregate Living COVID-19 Resources

[COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units](#)

[Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#)

[Public Health Ontario Checklist COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Congregate Living Settings](#)

[Public Health Ontario FOCUS ON Cohorting in Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings](#)

[Public Health Ontario Preparing for Respiratory Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings](#)