



HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD  
**Public Health**

## **Statement from local Medical Officer of Health strongly recommending practice of public health precautions**

Hastings and Prince Edward Counties/November 15, 2022

*Dr. Ethan Toumishey, Medical Officer of Health and CEO for HPEPH, has released a statement strongly recommending residents practice public health precautions in response to the spread of respiratory viruses in our region.*

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Dear community members,

As announced by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health on November 14, several respiratory viruses are circulating across the province and children are being hospitalized at much higher rates than usual due to these infections. From [November 6 – 12](#), nearly 5% of local Emergency Department (ED) visits from individuals of all ages were for influenza like illness. This is more than double the average for this time of year, based on data from the last 5 years. In addition, ED visits for respiratory complaints among individuals aged 0-17 are 194% higher than average for this time of year, based on the 5-year average.<sup>[1]</sup>

**It is strongly recommended that all residents revisit the simple public health guidelines that have helped limit the spread of illness throughout the pandemic.**

**Continue to screen daily for symptoms of cough, cold, flu, COVID-19, or RSV at [Ontario.ca/exposed](https://ontario.ca/exposed).**

- For school and childcare, use [Ontario school and childcare screener](#) or the printable school screening tools available at [hpePublicHealth.ca/back-to-school-planning-parents](https://hpePublicHealth.ca/back-to-school-planning-parents).

**Stay home if you are sick or have new or worsening symptoms – even symptoms that seem minor.**

- If you are caring for a sick child at home, you can find additional information on [the Ontario College of Family Physician's information sheet for respiratory illness](#).

**Wear a mask when in public indoor settings, cover your cough, and keep hands and surfaces clean.**

- Masking is strongly recommended for those who can do so, when in public and/or crowded indoor spaces, including schools and childcare.

**Stay up to date with vaccines.**

- Get your annual flu shot, and stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.
- Visit [hpePublicHealth.ca/vaccine-booking](https://hpePublicHealth.ca/vaccine-booking) or contact a local pharmacy to find COVID-19 vaccination near you.
- Contact your health care provider or a local pharmacy to get your annual flu shot. HPEPH is offering a limited number of appointments to children under the age of 5 who do not have a primary care provider. Visit [CanadaEHS.com/hpePublicHealth](https://CanadaEHS.com/hpePublicHealth) for upcoming clinic dates. Appointments are required.
- Ensure the school aged children in your life are up to date with their regular childhood immunizations. Find out more by contacting your health care provider or visiting [hpePublicHealth.ca/daycare-school-immunizations](https://hpePublicHealth.ca/daycare-school-immunizations).

The team at HPEPH is working together with community health care providers to prevent the spread of illness, but we need your help. We are stronger, together. Please do your part to protect the most vulnerable among us, and ensure our valuable health care resources remain available to those who need them most.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ethan Toumishey

Medical Officer of Health and CEO, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health

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[1] The week of November 6-12, local EDs experienced 232 ED visits from children aged 0-17 for respiratory illness (40% of all ED visits among this age group). The 5-year average for this time of year for this age group is 79 visits for respiratory illness (23% of all ED visits for this age group). Source: Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance (ACES), extracted November 15, 2022.

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**About Hastings Prince Edward Public Health**

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) is a public health agency that serves the counties of Hastings and Prince Edward from four local offices. HPEPH is situated and provides services on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. We monitor the health of our local population, deliver programs and services within our communities, and help develop healthy public policies. We provide information and support in many areas to help improve the health and well-being of our residents. Together with our communities, we help people become as healthy as they can be. For more information, please visit [hpePublicHealth.ca](http://hpePublicHealth.ca). You can also find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter and Instagram.

**We invite community partners and residents to share this Media Release with their respective networks.**