

Peel expanding vaccination efforts as Province announces increased eligibility for third dose

By Rob Paul

The Province of Ontario has released its plan to administered third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to all residents.

Prior to Ontario's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Kieran Moore announcing the plan, the Province was calling for residents of long-term care, retirement homes, and First Nations elder care lodges to receive a third dose for extra protection.

Now, as the winter approaches and people spend more time in close quarters inside, there's expected to be an increase in COVID-19 cases. This is why the Region of Peel is aiming to make getting the vaccine—whether first, second, or third dose—as easy as possible.

“We are focused on getting vaccines to people who want it in a way that is convenient for them,” said Dr. Lawrence Loh, Peel Medical Officer of Health. “We are working hard to double our system capacity to ensure we are ready to meet the needs of our community while at the same time be ready to launch COVID-19 pediatric and third dose immunizations for priority populations once approved by the province.

“I urge all residents, if you are eligible, please get vaccinated and if you have fears or concerns about vaccination, there are people in your community who you can speak to, to help ease those fears. Getting vaccinated remains our most effective way to exiting the acute phase of the pandemic.”

Peel has delivered more than 2.5 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and plans to expand the system significantly by December 1 as new directives, like third doses and pediatric vaccinations are approved by the Ontario government.

To achieve this, Peel is offering a variety of clinic styles, large and small, across the community, so residents can choose the clinic that best meets their needs.

These options include five public health clinics (two each in Brampton and Mississauga and one in Caledon), 275 system clinics (pharmacies, primary care clinics, hospital clinics and Ontario Health Team hubs), and 150 community clinics including clinics at schools, places of worship, shopping malls, community agencies and homebound.

The expanded clinic capacity means Peel can also deliver routine immunizations for school-aged children that have been missed during the pandemic. The three main focus areas for the plan are the last mile of continuing to target first and second doses for the unvaccinated to reach 90 per cent coverage, paediatric vaccination for children ages five to 11 as soon as first doses is approved and expanded eligibility for third doses as identified by the Province.

The Region's total case count is now at 118,135 with 214 new cases this week and there were five more deaths to bring the total to 1,027. Caledon saw just seven new cases and no new deaths this week to bring it to 4,907 total cases and 22 deaths.

As for vaccine coverage in Peel, 73.3 per cent of all residents are fully vaccinated and 77.3 per cent have at least one dose. 84.3 per cent of adults (18+) in the Region are fully vaccinated with 88.8 per cent having at least one dose. 88.6 per cent of those 12 and over have one dose and 84.1 per cent are fully vaccinated.

In total, 1,316,682 individuals have at least one dose and 1,189,320 are fully vaccinated in Peel. There are now 6,922 individuals in the Region who have received a third dose with eligibility now set to expand.

Moore announced November 3 the Provinces plan regarding booster shots and who will be eligible for booking a third dose as of November 6.

?In response to the latest evidence and guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, the Province will begin to offer booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to additional populations if at least six months have passed since their second dose,? he said. ?These groups include those age 70 and over, healthcare workers and designated essential care workers in congregate settings, individuals who received two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine or one dose of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis adults and their non-Indigenous household members. These additional groups will benefit from a booster dose as they are at increased risk of waning immunity and greater risk of exposure, serious illness, and outcomes.?

With studies suggesting a booster dose of the vaccine produces a good immune response that's higher after the first two doses, Moore also announced that the Province is working towards opening eligibility to all residents of Ontario in the future.

?The Province is planning to expand eligibility for a booster dose to all Ontarians age 12 and over in the coming months,? Moore said. ?Emerging evidence suggest vaccine effectiveness against asymptomatic infections and mild illness may decrease over time and a booster dose could help to restore and maintain protection against infection. Either mRNA vaccine may be used as a booster dose regardless of which COVID-19 vaccine was used in the primary series.?

To book a vaccine in the Region of Peel, visit www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment.

To download or print a copy of your proof of vaccination, visit covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-booking-support#proof-of-vaccination.

To learn more about the official QR code system Ontario has implemented and to access yours, visit covid-19.ontario.ca/get-proof.