



## Media Release

Dec. 3, 2021

For Immediate Release

### LOCAL HEALTH PARTNERS WARNING OF INTENSE SYSTEM PRESSURES, LONGER WAITS FOR CARE

**WINDSOR, ON.** \_ Our three Windsor-Essex hospitals, in conjunction with Essex-Windsor EMS and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, are cautioning the public about intensifying capacity pressures across the acute care system in our region.

Hospitals are reporting significant bed capacity concerns amid not only rising COVID-19 cases but also a recent surge in respiratory ailments. Although emergency cases are always attended to rapidly and receive immediate medical treatment, patients should expect that wait times and treatment for any ailments other than emergencies will be much longer than usual. Ambulance response times for non-emergency situations may also be longer than usual.

Hospitals are also doing what they can to preserve capacity for surgeries, many of which were postponed during peak periods of the pandemic since spring 2021. We are asking patients to seek care where possible, for non-emergency needs, at community settings, such as their family doctor or local medical clinic, to help alleviate strain on the system.

We are also experiencing a dramatic increase in young children with severe respiratory issues needing an immediate higher level of care. During the months of October, November, and the first two days of December, Windsor Regional Hospital has had to transfer eleven (11) paediatric patients suffering from respiratory virus (RSV) to either London or Detroit. By comparison, last year for the months of October and November, WRH transferred only three (3) paediatric patients. The ages of the children being transferred are generally two (2) years of age or younger. The reason for this sudden increase is unknown other than to recognize that respiratory viruses not directly related to COVID-19 are still with us and we need to be cognizant of them in our daily lives. The best way to limit their spread is to continue to follow public health measures and be especially careful with children at high risk for severe RSV disease including premature infants, children with chronic lung and heart conditions and children with weakened immune systems.

As reported by the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit this week, Windsor-Essex has also seen increased community spread of COVID-19, with the most recent 7-day rate of 123 cases per 100,000 population. A percentage of these cases will require hospitalization and critical care beds. A large percentage of these cases requiring hospitalization are unvaccinated. Erie Shores HealthCare notes that the COVID-19 percent positivity

from individuals being tested at its COVID-19 Assessment Centre is about 15% over the past week. As of November 29, 2021, the COVID-19 percent positivity for Windsor/Essex as a whole is 8.3%. By comparison, the Province of Ontario COVID-19 percent positivity is 3%.

Local health care partners continue to stress the importance of getting vaccinated to protect you and your loved ones from COVID-19, be it a first or second vaccination where able, or a booster shot when available.

As noted repeatedly by all of our health care partners, vaccinating ourselves against COVID-19, along with continuing to follow public health guidance on wearing masks, social distancing and adhering to local COVID-19 requirements, offer the best chance at protecting our community and keeping individuals out of hospital.

Information on vaccinations, including how to check eligibility for a COVID-19 vaccination and schedule an appointment, as well as the locations of vaccine pop-up walk-in vaccination clinics, can be found at [www.wevax.ca](http://www.wevax.ca). Flu shots are also recommended at local pharmacies, with viruses more easily spread now that we have entered the winter season with more individuals sharing space indoors.

We must work to preserve capacity in our healthcare system for patients. Our local partners will continue to collaborate to ensure our regional system is able to handle an influx of patients that will challenge our capacity to ensure timely access to care.

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