

July 22, 2022

MEMORANDUM TO: Retirement Home Licensees

FROM: Jacqueline Cureton, Assistant Deputy Minister
Seniors and Accessibility Policy, Programs and Strategic
Partnerships
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

SUBJECT: Expanded Eligibility for the Second COVID-19 Booster Dose
and Extended Access to Rapid Antigen Tests

I am writing today to provide additional details on the Chief Medical Officer of Health's (CMOH) July 13, 2022 [announcement](#) about second booster doses (fourth doses) for COVID-19 vaccines and access to rapid antigen tests.

Second Booster Doses

As of July 14, 2022, Ontarians aged 18 and over who received their first booster dose (third dose) at least 5 months ago are eligible for their second booster dose (fourth dose). This announcement extends second booster eligibility to all staff and visitors working in or visiting retirement homes.

The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA) strongly encourages retirement home operators to actively promote second booster doses to staff and visitors. Ontario is seeing a rising number of COVID-19 cases with the rapid spread of the Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 variants and congregate settings like retirement homes continue to be at increased risk for COVID-19 infection.

Second boosters for staff and visitors can be accessed by:

- Booking an appointment through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or your local public health unit's (PHUs) booking system;
- Calling the Provincial Vaccination Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900; or
- Booking an appointment through [participating pharmacies](#).

Please note that appointments are based on availability, which may vary by region.

Individuals who are at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19 infection and are recommended to get their second booster dose as soon as they become eligible, include:

- Individuals aged 60 and over;
- First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals, and their non-Indigenous household members 18 years of age and older;

- Residents of a long-term care home, retirement home, or Elder Care Lodge and older adults living in other congregate settings that provide assisted-living and health services; and
- Individuals who are moderately to severely immunocompromised.

For residents seeking second boosters, independent administration by retirement homes remains the preferred approach as there is great strain on the capacity of local PHUs. Retirement homes that are already set up for independent administration of COVID-19 vaccines should continue to work with their local PHU to request doses and ancillary supplies.

For retirement homes that are unable to independently administer the vaccine please consider other avenues for on-site vaccination for residents, in collaboration with the local PHU, such as working with:

- A local pharmacist to arrange for on-site vaccinations; or
- The local PHU to arrange for a mobile vaccination clinic.

Rapid Antigen Tests

On July 13, 2022, the CMOH also [announced](#) that the Ontario government will continue to provide free rapid antigen tests to the [general public](#) through existing channels like [grocery stores and pharmacies](#), as well as to workplaces, schools, hospitals, long-term care and retirement homes and other congregate settings until December 31, 2022. Currently, licensed retirement homes are receiving automatic shipments of rapid antigen tests on a monthly basis.

If you would like to adjust your order amount, update your contacts or delivery instructions, require an urgent shipment of tests due to a critical shortage, or have any questions related to test access, please contact MSAA at RHInquiries@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of retirement home residents. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, we appreciate the ongoing collaboration, dedication, and resilience of retirement home operators.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Jacqueline Cureton
Assistant Deputy Minister

c: Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health
Jay O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority

Cathy Hecimovich, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Retirement Communities Association
Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario