



# MEMORANDUM

## SE IPAC Hub Considerations for Omicron VOC

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Good Afternoon,

As you may be aware, the Omicron variant of concern (VOC) has been associated with significantly higher transmissibility and the ability to evade immunity from prior infection or vaccination. With the rise in Omicron cases in Ontario, it is critical to sustain active screening protocols and public health measures to help mitigate transmission within all congregate settings.

The SE IPAC Hub has some key considerations to assist you and your team in preparation for Omicron:

- 1) **IPAC/Occupational Health Support:** Your organization should have a designated IPAC lead and have Occupational Health support available. Staff should be aware of the supports within their facility and how to report staff illnesses as well as the process for isolating, managing and reporting symptomatic residents/clients. This includes afterhours, weekends and holidays. All staff and residents must be aware of the signs of symptoms of COVID-19, even subtle symptoms. Timely isolation and testing will help to limit transmission.
- 2) **Vaccination:** Continue to promote vaccination, including the third dose (boosters) for all staff and residents who are eligible. Three doses of mRNA vaccination have been shown to be more effective at preventing infection.
- 3) **Universal Masking & Physical Distancing:** Continue to be vigilant with public health measures within your organization, including universal masking and distancing amongst residents/staff/visitors. Indoor settings are a perfect environment to facilitate the spread of COVID-19 variants of concern like Omicron.
- 4) **N95 Respirators:** Ensure that all your staff are mask-fit tested for a N95 respirator and all your sites have an ample supply of N95 respirators required for your team. Ensure a system is in place for timely procurement of additional PPE, including N95 respirators to maintain adequate inventory. Staff must be educated on when a respirator is required and [how to perform a seal check](#) before each use.
- 5) **Ventilation and filtration:** Assess your facility to identify areas with poor ventilation as well as opportunities to increase fresh air return into the building. Develop a plan to procure portable HEPA units or air purifiers in the event of an outbreak or situation where there is a need to increase the filtration of the air in these areas. The use of portable HEPA units/air purifiers can help filter the air with high viral loads in which the air is found to be minimally circulating. Opening windows where permitted, even periodically throughout the day, can also help to significantly improve ventilation.
- 6) **Testing:** Increase routine rapid antigen testing (RAT) for staff, visitors or essential caregivers, regardless of vaccination status given the increased likelihood of infection with Omicron VOC.



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7) **Keep Updated:** Throughout the pandemic updates to recommendations are put out as new information becomes available. It is important to be aware of updates to ensure you are adhering to the most current recommendations to keep your team and those you provide care for safe. A newly released document is PHO: [Interim IPAC Recommendations for Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19](#)

In addition, Public Health Ontario will be hosting a series of webinars to outline these interim PPE recommendations. Watch out for emails or check [Public Health Ontario events page](#) for more information and to register for an event.

Remember to contact your local Public Health unit for any suspect or confirmed COVID-19 cases and your IPAC Hub for assistance and support.

SE IPAC HUB contact information, numerous resources and other updates can be found on the SE IPAC HUB website:

<https://kingstonhsc.ca/healthcare-providers/se-ipac-hub-and-spoke/about-us-se-hub-and-spoke>

SE IPAC coordinators can also be reached via email at: [SEhubintake@kingstonhsc.ca](mailto:SEhubintake@kingstonhsc.ca)

Please feel free to contact reach out for any IPAC related questions that we may be able to assist with.

Sincerely,

Your SE IPAC Hub team  
Kingston Health Sciences Centre

