

PROOF OF VACCINATION TO SOON BE REQUIRED FOR ALL THOSE OVER THE AGE OF 12 TO ENTER SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 6, 2021

London, ON – Huron Perth Public Health, the Middlesex-London Health Unit and Southwestern Public Health announced additional proof of vaccination requirements today for recreational facilities used for organized sports. Proof of COVID-19 vaccination will now be required for anyone over the age of 12 who enters an indoor area of a sports or recreational fitness facility to participate in, coach, officiate, or watch organized sport. The requirement will come into effect on October 31st.

The decision to extend the proof of vaccination requirement to all those attending these facilities and to a younger age group involved in organized sport was made due to the nature of sport and fitness activities, which can create opportunities for COVID-19 to spread more easily. These factors include close contact between participants, forceful exhalation and increased respiratory rate, prolonged exposure, crowded indoor spaces and the removal of masks/face coverings during physical activity. It was also made in part because everyone 12 years of age and older is currently eligible to receive the vaccine.

“Indoor sports increase the risk of spreading COVID-19,” says Dr. Chris Mackie, Medical Officer of Health with the Middlesex-London Health Unit. “We have seen outbreaks in these settings across Ontario, and immunization is the solution if we want sports to continue.”

“The goal of this instruction is to reduce the risk of serious illness transmitted between players, coaches, and their families cheering them on from the stands. Organized sports are community events – we need to balance protecting our community, while finding ways to safely enjoy the activities we are passionate about,” says Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health at Southwestern Public Health.

“These additional protective measures will make it safer for everyone entering a facility for organized sports, whether to play, practice, coach, volunteer, or watch,” says Dr. Miriam Klassen, Medical Officer of Health, Huron Perth Public Health.

The three health units will issue *Letters of Instruction* shortly to the owners and operators of facilities in the communities they serve, where organized sports are played or practised. The letters were created by the Medical Officers of Health under their authority outlined in the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, S.O. 2020, c.17* and extend the provisions of *O.Reg 364/20*, which requires proof of COVID-19 vaccination and identification for all those 18 years of age and older who actively participate in organized sports or recreational fitness programs. In addition to players, the provisions of the *Letters of Instruction* apply to coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators aged 12 and over.

In addition to the added risks of virus spread associated with sport, the three health units continue to see new COVID-19 infections, particularly among people who are unvaccinated, including those under the age of 12, who are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine. The provisions contained within the *Letters of Instruction* come into effect at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, October 31st, 2021.

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