

Call for vigilance

Newsletter of the Nunavik Department of Public Health

Respiratory viruses – Fall 2023

Written by
Dr. Jean-Sébastien Touchette, medical advisor
Josianne Fournier, infectious diseases consultant
Department of Public Health, Nunavik RBHSS

Context

Respiratory virus season is starting across Quebec, and Nunavik is no exception.

We are witnessing an increase in reports of COVID-19 outbreaks in the workplace in the region, as well as an overall increase in positive results for COVID-19. It is important for clinicians to be more vigilant and expect cases of influenza and RSV to be observed in the region soon.

COVID-19, influenza and RSV are infections that put vulnerable groups such as young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health issues, and the elderly at high risk of complications.

Testing

We remind you that, according to the criteria established by the INESSS, **all symptomatic people living in a remote or isolated community are targeted in the indications for access to laboratory NAATs (PCR tests) for COVID-19 and influenza, as well as for treatment for influenza.** Viral multiplex tests are available in both hospital laboratories of the region.

Treatment of respiratory infections

In a context of "co-circulation" of respiratory viruses, the goal is to offer treatment options quickly to people at high risk of complications from COVID-19 or influenza who exhibit a flu-like syndrome. We invite you to consult the "Reference documents" section of the [BAO COVID-19 et infections respiratoires](#) provided by the NRBHSS on this topic.

For COVID-19:

Some patients at high risk of developing complications from COVID-19 may benefit from an antiviral treatment (Paxlovid™) to reduce the risk of complications. Please refer to the following document (available in French only):

www.inesss.qc.ca/fileadmin/doc/INESSS/COVID-19/Algorithme_traitement_COVID_ambulatoire_VF.pdf

For influenza:

The entire Nunavik population displaying a flu-like syndrome is eligible for influenza testing and treatment. However, some Nunavik residents are even more at risk of developing complications, such as:

1. Children under 2 years of age (children under 6 months of age are most at risk);
2. People aged 60 and over;
3. People living in a CHSLD, a seniors' home or an intermediate resource;
4. People with a chronic disease or condition requiring regular medical follow-up (heart, lung, kidney, liver, hematology, neurology, cancer, immunosuppression, significant obesity);
5. Pregnant women in good health in their 2nd or 3rd trimester OR with a chronic disease or condition, regardless of the stage of pregnancy;
6. People living in the same household as a person at risk of complications from influenza or who provide care at that person's home.

These criteria, which do not replace the clinician's judgment, do help in targeting patients who are most likely to benefit from the treatments available in the region. Syndromic antiviral treatment for influenza can be considered in Nunavik, regardless of vaccination status. Please refer to the INESSS document for details (available in French only):

https://www.inesss.qc.ca/fileadmin/doc/INESSS/Rapports/Usage_optimal/Guide_Influenza_enfant_adulte_w eb_FR_01.pdf.

The same document also explains the criteria for presumptive antiviral treatment or antiviral prophylaxis in the event of an influenza outbreak or the exposure of a person at high risk of complications.

Vaccination

We remind you that vaccination remains the best way to protect against respiratory infections (COVID-19, influenza, pneumococcus, etc.), and that you play a vital role as caregivers in reminding your patients of this.

For questions or clinical support during business hours, an e-mail can be sent to the following address:
ph.community.ipc.nrbhss@ssss.gouv.qc.ca