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## News

May 8, 2023

### Southwestern Public Health pauses COVID-19 data dashboard; will transition to respiratory virus report this fall

*More than 190,000 annual visits to COVID-19 dashboard underscores desire for local data*

Since 2020, Southwestern Public Health has published a [COVID-19 data dashboard](#) to inform residents of local cases, hospitalizations, outbreaks, intensive care admissions, and deaths resulting from COVID-19. More than 190,000 unique visitors visited the dashboard annually.

Recent changes to provincial data collection and limited testing eligibility have impacted the statistical credibility of the current dashboard. As a result, Southwestern Public Health will pause the COVID-19 dashboard reporting as of Tuesday May 9, 2023.

“What began as a method to compile and report case data became an important tool for local residents to assess COVID-19 risks,” says Carolyn Richards, Program Manager for the Foundational Standards planning and epidemiology team. “A key function of public health is to report local health data – and that data needs to be reliable and relevant. We revised our reporting several times during the pandemic to adapt to changing data sources. We now have fewer data sources available, so a pause is needed.”

During this pause the health unit’s epidemiologists will conduct a thorough review of data sources for COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses, including influenza. The health unit plans to relaunch the dashboard as a respiratory virus dashboard in early fall to align with provincial surveillance plans for respiratory virus reporting.

“We see such value in connecting local residents with data that informs them of health risks, especially as we plan for how to communicate other respiratory risks in fall and winter,” says Richards.

Wastewater surveillance data for COVID-19 continues to be available for the wider Southwestern Ontario region through [Public Health Ontario](#). Ongoing updates to COVID-19 and influenza activity by health unit is also available through [Public Health Ontario](#).

#### About Southwestern Public Health

[Southwestern Public Health](#) works with its partners to ensure the health of the whole community. Our programs respond to public health emergencies; promote healthy lifestyles; help prevent injuries, illness, and disease in the community; and promote positive change and social conditions that improve

health. Southwestern Public Health delivers mandated programs under the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) and is regulated by the [Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act](#). The health unit maintains primary locations in Woodstock and St. Thomas. For more information, visit [www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca).

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