

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

October 19, 2022

Protect our local health care system, get vaccinated!

Health care leaders in our region are coming together to share an important message: Stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations and get your flu shot to protect our local health care system. The bivalent booster dose offers very good protection against severe infection, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

Preventing hospitalizations due to COVID-19 and influenza increases the likelihood there will be capacity to treat patients for other illnesses locally. Catching up on surgical waitlists is a priority for many local hospitals, and progress can be slowed when forced to shift time and resources to treat COVID-19 and influenza patients. As hospitals in our area face staffing and bed shortages, it is important that residents take steps to minimize the need for hospital visits due to vaccine preventable disease.

Provincial data shows the strong protection the COVID-19 vaccine offers as rates of hospitalization and death from COVID-19 are significantly lower in people who are vaccinated for the virus. By getting vaccinated, you are doing your part to support our local health care system. To get a flu shot and/or a COVID-19 vaccine, book an appointment at www.nwhu.on.ca or visit your local pharmacy.

Along with vaccination, the public is reminded that frequent hand washing, wearing a mask, and staying home when unwell are additional ways to effectively prevent the spread of infectious illnesses this cold and flu season.

-30-

Doreen Armstrong-Ross, President and CEO, **Dryden Regional Health Centre**
Douglas Semple, President and CEO, **Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre**
Henry Gauthier, President and CEO, **Riverside Health Care**
Jorge VanSlyke, President and CEO, **Atikokan General Hospital**
Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health, **Northwestern Health Unit**
Ray Racette, President and CEO, **Lake of the Woods District Hospital**
Sue LeBeau, President and CEO, **Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital**

Media Contact:

Dr. Kit Young Hoon
Medical Officer of Health
Northwestern Health Unit
jbegg@nwhu.on.ca