

HSC COVID-19 Update

November 24, 2021



With a new wave of COVID-19 moving through Hutterite communities in all provinces, the grip of the pandemic has still not loosened, and precautions must continue.

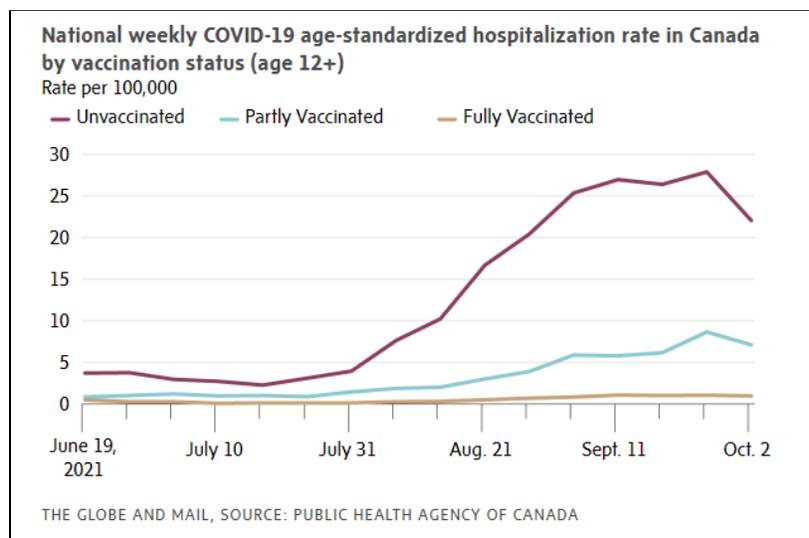
Current Impacts

This new wave has directly impacted many Hutterite communities. Over the past few months, we have seen a steady increase in COVID-related hospitalizations and deaths. Some communities have experienced multiple hospitalizations and/or multiple deaths. At the same time, increasing evidence demonstrates that a COVID illness, even in younger people, can bring life-altering consequences in the form of long-COVID.

Public Health Vaccination Statistics

Vaccination continues to be a priority for Public Health. According to official reports in Manitoba, the hospitalizations rate among the unvaccinated is about seven times higher than in the vaccinated population; the unvaccinated contribute disproportionately to hospitalizations, placing increased strain on an

already fragile health care system. It is for this reason that Public Health orders currently directly affect the unvaccinated. The higher the percentage of the fully vaccinated population, the lower the overall number of hospitalizations. For example, in September, in Canada, the unvaccinated were 8 times more likely to get infected with COVID than the vaccinated.¹



Breakthrough Cases

The provinces are also reporting breakthrough cases among the vaccinated. Such cases have been expected. Even if one is vaccinated and benefiting from reduced personal risk, you can still spread the virus to others. The difference is that COVID infections among the vaccinated are typically less severe than those among the unvaccinated.

A Message from MLA Eileen Clark

Manitoba Public Health and government officials have been in regular contact with HSC. Eileen Clarke, MLA for Agassiz, recently communicated an important message to all Hutterites: Large Hutterite funerals are not only endangering fellow Hutterites but also friends and neighbours. Government officials are aware that Hutterites, vaccinated and unvaccinated alike, are gathering for funerals and weddings. This is leading to a rapid spread of COVID within the Hutterite

¹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-despite-breakthrough-cases-data-show-vaccinations-are-reducing-covid/>

communities as well as surrounding areas, infecting especially the unvaccinated and driving sickness and hospitalization. Further, she explained that she hears first-hand from Hutterites who have gotten vaccinated in secret because they fear being ridiculed by fellow Hutterites for taking the vaccine.

Our Duty

The apostle Luke warns us, "See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness." Suppose our words and attitude prevent someone from taking precautions or getting vaccinated out of fear, or results in them being hospitalized. Are we a good light? We recognize the complexity of this issue and want to caution our members that *Nachfolger Jesu* are called to care for each other. As we navigate the road of COVID restrictions and vaccines, let us listen to each other, be kind and generous without building walls of hostility, regardless of our vaccination status while still recognizing the clear evidence of their effectiveness.

HSC Recommendations

In light of the recent COVID activity, HSC makes the following recommendations:

- Communities should voluntarily disclose to others whether they have active COVID cases.
- Gatherings should be restricted to those who are well. Participants are encouraged to self-screen to ensure that they are not ill and have not been in contact with others who have exhibited flu-like symptoms. Unvaccinated family members who attend gatherings are encouraged to isolate and take extra precautions for at least 2-3 days and, if available, seek testing either via a rapid test or provincial testing site. HSC is currently in contact with Public Health to determine if they can supply communities with rapid testing kits.
- Vaccination continues to be the most effective and best-proven protection against serious outcomes related to COVID-19. No other treatment method has the same body of evidence supporting its use and effectiveness. Based on this, able people, especially the elderly and the immune-compromised, should strongly consider getting vaccinated. CAUTION: Please DO NOT get vaccinated if you currently have COVID or feel you have been exposed to COVID recently.
- If you remain hesitant about vaccination, please be active in different ways to reduce the spread of this virus. Everybody can do things to reduce the chance of spreading the virus, such as staying away from large gatherings, masking, physical distancing, and hand-sanitizing.
- Work with your health care provider to identify any changes you could make to your diet, exercise regimen, and lifestyle which would better prepare your body to fend off the virus, should you contract it.

Conclusions

We realize that many of our members disapprove of government restrictions and mandates but still recognize the seriousness of COVID and are doing what they can to reduce the risk of the virus hurting loved ones. We encourage everybody to remember that government officials have a responsibility for keeping the largest number of people as safe and healthy as possible.

We are grateful for everything that is being done to help keep our members safe.

- Hutterian Safety Council COVID-19 Taskforce