



Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board

Tuesday, May 27th, 2025

HEALTH PROTECTION

Infectious Diseases

Measles:

As of May 21st, a total of 2 confirmed cases of measles have been reported in Renfrew County and District (RCD). Both cases are linked to the large multijurisdictional outbreak centered in Southwestern Ontario.

In our response to mitigate the spread of measles, the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) activated its Emergency Control Group and established a multidisciplinary Measles Response Team to meet increased operational demands.

The Measles Response Team has been:

- Responding to public inquiries via a dedicated intake line
- Conducting case and contact investigations
- Administering vaccinations through community clinics and door-to-door in the most at-risk areas
- Providing post-exposure prophylaxis to measles contacts as necessary
- Ensuring isolation and quarantine are adhered to when required
- Testing symptomatic individuals for measles

Throughout the response thus far, the team has followed 38 measles contacts and helped the most affected community increase their 1-2 dose measles immunization rate from 50% to 86%. This collaborative work is ongoing.

In April, RCDHU identified public measles exposure sites within Renfrew County. The public was advised to contact RCDHU if they were potentially exposed and either unvaccinated or experiencing symptoms. Interviews were completed with CBC and CTV to share details about the potential exposure in Renfrew County and about measles more generally. No additional suspect or confirmed cases resulted from this exposure – demonstrating how our relatively high local vaccination rates provide a significant measure of protection.

Both confirmed local measles cases are now resolved and can no longer spread infection. Thanks to a strong and coordinated response, the local spread of measles has been effectively contained at this time.

RCDHU continues to monitor the measles activity in Ontario. There have been 1 622 total measles cases linked to the multijurisdictional outbreak across Ontario from October 18th, 2024 to May 13th, 2025. The majority (76.3%) of these cases have been among infants, children, and adolescents—95.5% of whom were unvaccinated.

In total, Ontario has reported 1 646 measles cases so far in 2025. Of these, only 61 cases were not linked to the outbreak:

- 17 had a history of travel (measles acquired outside Canada)
- 1 was linked to a visitor to Ontario
- 43 cases remain without a known source of exposure

Respiratory Infections:

As of May 21st, local COVID-19, influenza, and RSV test positivity levels remain low. Hospital bed occupancy due to respiratory infections and respiratory outbreaks both remain at moderate levels. The proportion of local emergency department visits related to respiratory infections is still high at 10%, but has been trending down slowly since the beginning of the year.

Across the province, hospitalizations related to COVID-19 are at the lowest level since the summer of 2020. COVID-19 deaths in recent weeks are the lowest observed since the pandemic began.

Immunization

Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA):

On March 26th, 2025, the school suspension order became effective for 119 students born in 2007 and 2017. Staff have worked closely with schools, families, and healthcare providers to provide support with resources needed for students to meet the ISPA immunization requirements and return to school.

Over the course of the 20-day suspension period, 114 students (95.8%) who were suspended updated their requirements under ISPA and were able to return to school as soon as this was confirmed.

Grade 7 Program:

The second round of Grade 7 school-based immunization clinics for Hepatitis B (HB), Meningococcal, and Human Papilloma Virus started on April 2nd, 2025 and will continue until early June. Approximately 40 school-based clinics will be hosted across RCD. Students may also choose to be vaccinated through their health care provider, or by booking an appointment at an RCDHU routine immunization clinic. As of May 8th, 2025, 22 school-based clinics have been completed.

COVID-19 Vaccine:

The Ministry of Health announced that the Ontario Spring COVID-19 vaccine campaign

is running from April to June 2025. An additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for previously vaccinated individuals who have completed their primary series and are at increased risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection including:

- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors
- Individuals 6 months of age and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
- Individuals 55 years and older who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis, and their non-Indigenous household members who are 55 years and older

As of May 9th, 2025, 4 mobile services clinics have been completed at retirement homes in RCD and additional clinics are scheduled over the following 4 weeks.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Staff are participating in Freshet meetings to support ongoing preparedness for spring flooding. Municipalities along the Ottawa River from Pembroke to Arnprior have been affected by high water levels. The Ministry of Natural Resources issued a Flood Watch for the MNR Pembroke district, which expired on May 22nd. RCDHU has shared watershed statements through social media, as well as weather events that may impact flooding. Additionally, messaging about flood preparedness continues to be shared through social media.

A five-year commemoration was held for COVID-19 to recognize the dedication, resilience, and work done by staff over the course of the pandemic.

May 4th to 10th was Emergency Preparedness Week. Emergency Preparedness Week is a national awareness campaign that encourages individuals to take steps to protect themselves, their families, and their communities during emergencies. This year's theme was "Be Prepared. Know Your Risks." It served as a reminder for residents RCD to understand the local risks and take action to be ready in case of an emergency. Throughout the week, RCDHU shared social media posts to raise awareness and promote preparedness. These posts focused on understanding [potential risks in the region](#) and learning practical steps to stay safe.

Healthy Environments

Rabies Control:

RCDHU is once again promoting the [Yellow Ribbon campaign](#) for animal bite and rabies awareness in May. The campaign promotes the wearing of a yellow ribbon or collar or scarf around a dog's neck to let people know to approach with caution, thereby reducing the likelihood of unintended animal bites and unnecessary healthcare visits. Several veterinary clinics and pet stores across the health unit are promoting the campaign, offering free yellow ribbons and information cards. A media release has been issued to raise awareness.

Food Safety:

A large component of the healthy environments mandate is food premise inspections. Public health inspectors have completed the first round of inspections of high-risk establishments to protect the public from foodborne illness. High risk facilities are those that serve vulnerable populations and offer food that is prepared through multiple handling steps. Each high-risk facility must be routinely inspected at least once every 4 months. Inspections of moderate risk food establishments, such as fast-food restaurants, are being prioritized to have at least one inspection completed by the end of June, as advised under the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Vectorborne Disease:

Public health inspectors are actively monitoring ticks in RCD. Tick dragging is taking place in southern (Combermere, Renfrew), western (Wilno area), and northern (Chalk River) parts of RCD. The intention is to monitor for the movement of black-legged ticks that may carry tickborne diseases. Current confirmed risk areas are Arnprior, Calabogie, Cobden, and Eganville.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy

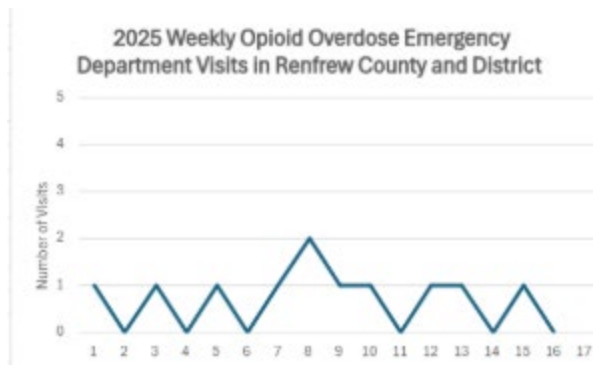
Following the April 10th release of the Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy (RCDDS), the promotion of the 25 priorities has been a major focus. Weekly social media messages have been posted to explain the context and priorities for each of the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and community safety.

A second communication campaign has also been running concurrently titled "Share Your Story," where Renfrew County and District residents have been engaged to tell their unique experience with recovering from a substance use disorder and the local support they received. Their courageous stories have garnered excellent online engagement and discussion that will hopefully inspire and empower others who face similar challenges to reach out for help.

Looking forward, the steering committee will receive progress updates from the pillar working groups on the indicators that are associated with each of the priorities. Additionally, the steering committee will review local data in consideration of which substances should be the focus of future phases of the strategy, as it expands beyond opioids.

RCCDS Substance Use Harm Indicators:

RCDHU staff continue to monitor key indicators associated with the harms of substance use. In 2025 so far, as of April 30th, there have been 11 emergency department visits related to opioid overdose and as of May 8th there have been 6 suspect drug toxicity deaths reported.



Harm Reduction

Outreach Team and SPRITE Testing:

The Outreach Team continues to bring RCDHU services to clients across RCD and forge new partnerships with community agencies. Since the beginning of 2025, the Outreach Team completed 41 visits to 13 different sites across Renfrew County & District. During those visits, 264 naloxone kits were distributed, and 181 new people were trained in their use. The Team had over 1000 interactions with clients throughout these visits. The Team continues to provide harm reduction and sexual health supplies, offer sexual health testing, and connect clients to other RCDHU services or community partners where needed.

SPRITE testing continues to be offered at Outreach Team events and at RCDHU's Pembroke office. As of April 30th, 137 tests for syphilis, HIV and hepatitis C have been completed under this program. Individuals that test positive have been successfully referred for follow-up and treatment. Most of the clients tested would be considered at high risk for acquiring sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections, and do not have a family doctor or the means to seek out testing on their own.

Indigenous Cultural Safety Training:

Two members from the Outreach Team attended “Wabano-Win: The Art of Seeing Clearly” Indigenous Cultural Safety Training at the Wabano Centre in Ottawa on March 21st. The training helped to foster a deeper understanding and respect for Indigenous perspectives on health and wellness. By incorporating the experience and information learned, the Outreach Team will provide an inclusive and supportive environment for Indigenous clients, reducing barriers to care and providing more effective, compassionate and culturally safe services.

County of Renfrew Licensed Childcare – Nutrition Support

In March, RCDHU provided a virtual educational seminar to licensed childcare providers through the County of Renfrew. The session focused on applying Canada's Food Guide (CFG) to meet the nutritional requirements outlined in the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) and the [Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#), using the [Child Care Menu Planning – Practical Guide](#) developed by the Ontario Dietitians in Public Health.

This guide was recently updated in 2024 to align with the latest version of CFG and continues to support childcare staff by translating the plate-based recommendations into practical, food-based guidelines for planning daily meals and snacks. To support the implementation of this updated resource, the seminar is now being offered biannually in the evenings to accommodate the schedules of childcare staff. This ongoing partnership with the County of Renfrew promotes professional development, supports healthy eating environments, and helps ensure continued compliance with provincial standards across early years settings.

Submitted by:

Dr. Jason Morgenstern, Medical Officer of Health
Renfrew County and District Health Unit