

2025-26 Respiratory Illness Season

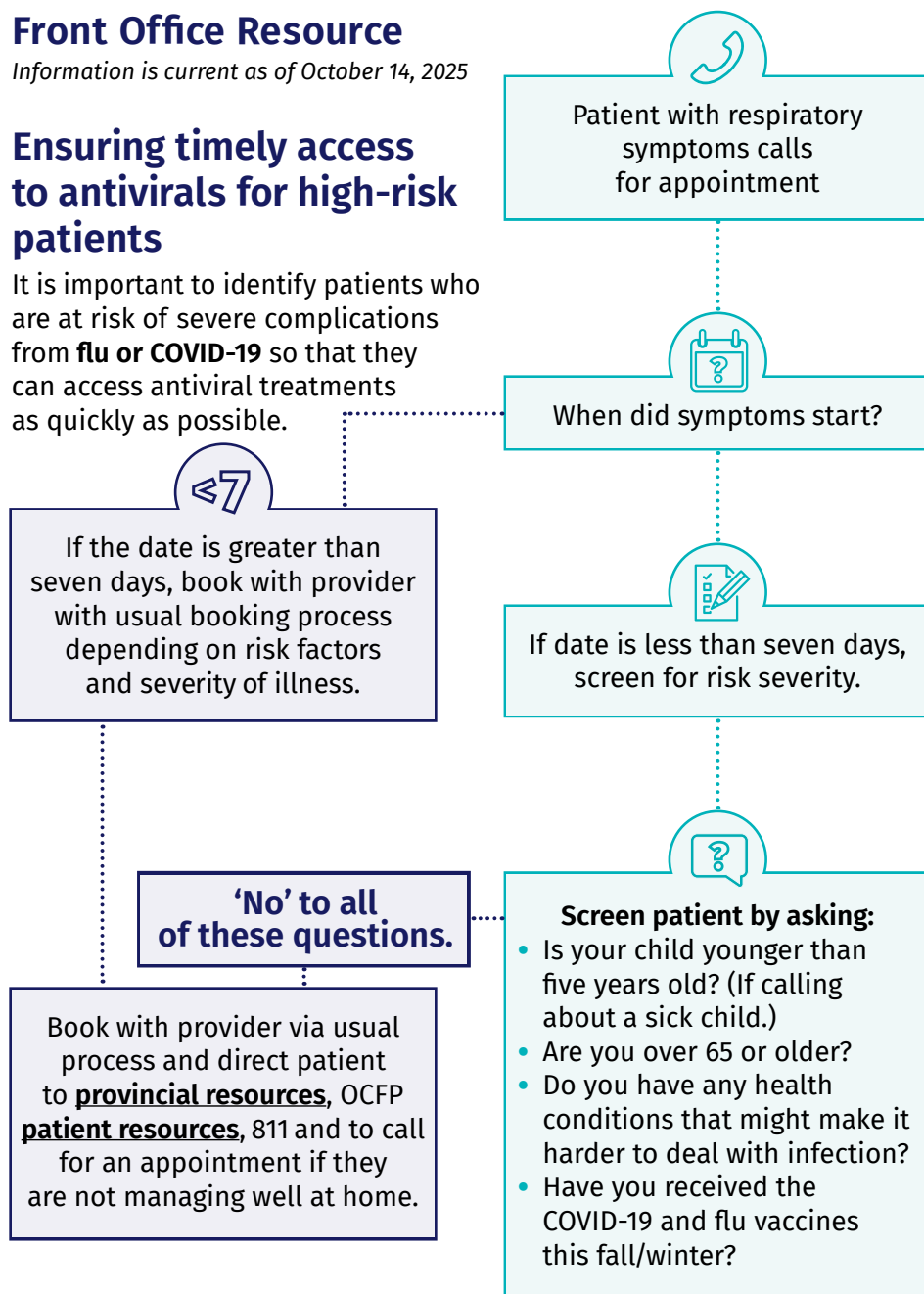
Screening for Respiratory Illness

Front Office Resource

Information is current as of October 14, 2025

Ensuring timely access to antivirals for high-risk patients

It is important to identify patients who are at risk of severe complications from **flu or COVID-19** so that they can access antiviral treatments as quickly as possible.



If patients think they may have COVID-19 they can also selfscreen using the provincial online tool: www.ontario.ca/covid-treatment-screener which can direct them to pharmacy for testing and access to Paxlovid. This treatment is for patients who test positive for COVID-19 and who are at high risk for severe illness from the virus.

Antivirals for flu should be initiated as soon as possible after symptom onset, ideally within 12 hours but up to 48 hours from symptom onset. Consideration can be given to later initiation of antivirals. For COVID-19, Paxlovid must be started within **five** days of symptom onset and Remdesivir within **seven** days of symptom onset.

'Yes' to any of these questions.

Follow office procedure to ensure assessment within 24 hours. Appointments can be in-person or virtual.

Ontario College of Family Physicians



Risk factors for severe illness or complications from the flu or COVID-19 include:

- Younger than five years old or over 60 years old
- Living in chronic care facility
- Indigenous
- Asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, or other lung diseases, including tuberculosis
- Medications that affect the immune system, like chemotherapy or steroids
- Under 18 and regularly taking aspirin
- Heart diseases (e.g., coronary artery disease, heart failure)
- High blood pressure
- Kidney disease
- Diabetes (type 1 or type 2)
- Neurological disease or neurodevelopmental disorder (e.g., spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, cerebral palsy)
- Immune system disorder (e.g., HIV infection, common variable immunodeficiency)
- Cancer
- Organ or stem cell transplant
- Pregnant, or pregnant within the last four weeks
- Intellectual or developmental disability
- Mental health disorders
- Smoker
- Obesity
- Sickle cell disease