

Need for repeated communication on a Winterplan throughout the ‘viral season’

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1. Epidemiological situation

As described in the RAG report dd. 30/11/2022, a slight increasing trend is noted in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations, related to the circulation of the new BQ1 variant and the real start of the winter season. In addition, intense circulation of RSV is observed, with fast increasing need for hospitalization of young children; occasional cases of influenza have been noted as well.

2. Recommendations

The SCC would like to remind the earlier advice of a ‘Winterplan’ (dd. 11/10/2022) with strengthening the different preventive actions (the so called ‘Swiss cheese model’). This needs to be seen and communicated as a generic plan in order to decrease the impact of all respiratory viruses during the winter months (i.e. not only COVID-19 and not only this wave), and could be compared to the set of measures taken during other particular periods of the year (e.g. ‘Heath plan’ in summer)

Suggested ‘Good winter habits’, as a bundle of 4 main messages for the general public:

- 1. Basic prevention: always ensure optimal ventilation and hand hygiene**
- 2. When ill, stay at home until you have recovered (at least 7 days after start of symptoms and until ≥ 3 days without feverⁱ). Wat betekent dit**
- 3. When having just mild respiratory symptoms, use a mask in public transport and crowded indoor places. Avoid gatherings and close contact with young children and vulnerable persons**
- 4. For all vulnerable persons and health care workers: get vaccinated for COVID and for the flu. For vulnerable persons, vaccination for pneumococcal infections is also recommended.**

These ‘good winter habits’ should be repeated and communicated on a regular basis, in the press, at public places, public transport, in care settings etc...

This is particularly important with the upcoming festive seasons, including numerous gatherings of families, and mixing of several generations.

Good visuals will be important to maintain these 4 messages!

ⁱ [Isolatie | Coronavirus Covid-19 \(sciensano.be\)](https://www.sciensano.be/nl/isolatie-coronavirus-covid-19)