

February 26, 2020

Statement from Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health, Toronto Public Health:

Today, I spoke with media regarding a new positive test result for COVID-19 in a woman in her 60s who visited the Emergency Department at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre on the evening of Monday, February 24. As I have stated before, it is not surprising to learn of this news as we have a very mobile population with a lot of international travel. It is therefore likely that we will continue to see more people presenting with symptoms and a travel history to affected areas.

This newly diagnosed person has a recent history of travel to Iran. She became unwell after arriving in Toronto. Upon presenting to the hospital's emergency department, a thorough medical assessment was completed and COVID-19 testing was initiated. She was then discharged and is presently at home in self-isolation. Two members of this person's family are also currently in self-isolation at home.

My staff are following up with this person and their close contacts. We do this to monitor the person's symptoms and to notify others that they may have been exposed to a potential health risk. We do this to help people protect population health and to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases in our community.

To date, there have been three other people diagnosed with COVID-19 in Toronto. One person is currently recovering in self-isolation and the other two people have since recovered from their illness.

At this time the virus is not circulating locally, however given the global spread, we are actively working with our City and health partners to plan for the potential of local spread. We continue to carefully monitor this situation and encourage residents to stay informed by regularly reviewing credible information sources.

Currently, our advice remains:

1. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-hand sanitizer.
2. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough, or sneeze.
3. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough in your sleeve.
4. Stay at home when you are sick.

These measures may seem simple, but they are very powerful ways to protect yourself and others from getting sick.

While social media is an excellent tool to help share information quickly, it can also just as quickly contribute to the unhelpful spread of misinformation. I therefore encourage residents to visit our website, www.toronto.ca/coronavirus, as we continue to update it regularly. Residents can also call our hotline 416-338-7600, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. to ask questions.

Media contact: Lenore Bromley, Toronto Public Health, 416-338-7974,
Lenore.Bromley@toronto.ca