

Update on COVID-19

Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health

April 8, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.

Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- As of 12:30 p.m. today there are 1,570 cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. This includes 1,332 confirmed cases and 238 probable ones. There are 156 cases hospitalized, and there are 71 in intensive care units.
- Sadly, there have been a total of 49 deaths from COVID-19 in Toronto. I am sure you all join me as I extend my sincerest condolences to the families and friends of all individuals who have died from COVID-19 in our community.
- In yesterday's update, I indicated that a case of COVID-19 was identified in Seaton House, one of 69 shelters for those experiencing homelessness in our city. My team continues to work with staff at Seaton House to ensure that enhanced infection prevention and control measures are being implemented, including ongoing efforts to increase physical distancing among clients.
- By the end of this week, another 80 clients will be moved from Seaton House to new spaces to achieve optimal physical distancing within this facility. Onsite testing is also being completed to identify if there are additional COVID-19 cases.
- I would also like to update you on the situation at the Seven Oaks long-term care home. Overall, we are starting to see a positive effect of the stringent outbreak measures that have been put in place throughout the home, and the rate of new infections is starting to slow down.
- However, I'm very sorry and saddened to report that as of this morning at Seven Oaks there are:
 - 45 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 56 probable cases among the total 249 residents at this long-term care home;
 - 16 COVID-linked deaths and an additional 4 deaths in this home for which the cause is still under investigation; and
 - 13 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff.
- Unfortunately, we anticipate that there may be additional deaths among those residents who have become ill with COVID-19 over the past few weeks.

- I recognize and appreciate that we are all concerned about those in the Seven Oaks home community, but I would ask that we respect their privacy.
- It is important to note that COVID-19 has an incubation period of up to 14 days, so there is always a delay between when you implement control measures and when you start to see the impact of those measures. We are continuing to work closely with Seven Oaks to ensure that all outbreak measures are in place, and that staff, residents and families are supported as best as possible during these challenging circumstances.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every person working at Seven Oaks, or in any other long-term care home, or retirement home, for caring for our loved ones. They are responding courageously during this unprecedented time and they deserve our respect, support, and gratitude.
- On another note, I continue to receive questions about how people can protect themselves against COVID-19. People are especially interested in what role there is for wearing a mask.
- Before discussing the evidence on mask use, let me first say that the best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid close contact with others. This means staying at home as much as possible, and when you go out, to practise physical distancing.
- In addition, you should wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean and free of virus. You should also avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- I also want to share that recently, the Public Health Agency of Canada issued a statement on the use of non-medical or cloth masks. What they said was while wearing a non-medical mask in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it from other people's germs, it may stop you from spreading your germs to other people. This is especially true in situations where it is difficult to keep a distance of 6 feet from others. This new advice is based on the emerging science that people may be contagious even if they don't have symptoms.

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- When you do leave your home to seek medical care, or for essential supplies, practising physical distancing is the best way to protect yourself from getting COVID-19. It is also the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others. In these situations, when you are outside your home, wearing a cloth mask can prevent your respiratory droplets and your germs from spreading to others.
- Putting it all together, what this means is even if you don't have symptoms, by wearing a cloth mask, you may be better able to keep your germs to yourself. I want to be clear:
 - Wearing a cloth mask, or scarf has not been proven to protect the person wearing it from the germs of others.
 - Wearing a cloth mask, or scarf, is also not a replacement for following proven prevention measures such as staying home, physical distancing and handwashing.
 - Wearing a cloth mask, or scarf, is just one more thing you can do, if you choose to, to help protect others.
- If you decide to wear a cloth mask, you should use it properly and safely. This means:
 - Making sure the mask fits your face properly.
 - Not sharing your mask with others.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly before putting it on.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly after taking it off.
 - Avoid touching your face when you put the mask on and off.
 - Avoid touching the mask while using it.
- Medical masks should be kept for healthcare workers and first responders. We have to ensure that these essential workers have the supplies they need to take good care of us.
- In closing, I want to remind you that wearing a cloth mask is one measure that you can take to protect others around you. Masks alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. You still need to do the right things: stay home, stay safe, and take care of each other.