

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
April 9, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- As of 12:30 p.m. today there are 1,769 cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. This includes 1,519 confirmed cases and 250 probable ones. There are 174 cases hospitalized, and 76 in intensive care units.
- Sadly, there have been a total of 54 deaths from COVID-19 in Toronto. As I stated yesterday, please 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.
- Yesterday was a difficult day as we learned about the devastating impact of COVID-19 in some of our worst-hit long-term care homes. Sadly, a large number of residents are sick and many have died. These people are our parents, our grandparents and our loved ones. The fatal impact of COVID-19 on our loved ones in long-term care is becoming painfully clear.
- Families moved their loved ones into long-term care homes so they could receive the specialized, extra care that they needed.
- Many people have asked me how COVID-19 outbreaks can happen in our long-term care homes. It is an important question to ask because the answers can help us better protect our loved ones in these settings.
- One way or another, COVID-19 gets into long-term care homes through people; this includes the people who visit long-term care homes and the people who work there.
- It is important to remember that COVID-19 is new – the virus was only discovered 3 months ago. All around the world, we are still learning how to slow it down and prevent further spread in settings like our long-term care homes. The most important way is through physical distancing.

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- One of the first measures – and in many ways the most difficult - was stopping family and friends from visiting their loved ones in long-term care homes. This was a critical step to reducing the chance of visitors inadvertently bringing the virus into these settings – as unfortunately has happened in some of our long-term care homes.
- Part of our core work in public health is working with long-term care homes to ensure proper measures are in place to control outbreaks and prevent disease spread. For COVID-19 these include:
 - Initiating twice a day screening of residents and staff to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and catch new infections as early as possible.
 - Implementing physical distancing measures and cancelling all group activities.
 - Enhancing cleaning particularly for frequently touched surfaces.
 - Working with long-term care homes to make sure that personal protective equipment is used appropriately to minimize health risks.
 - Restricting staff to only work at one facility during an outbreak to reduce the chance of spread from one facility to another.
- Essential workers in our long-term care homes are critical to keeping our loved ones safe, but they are at risk too and we must also keep them safe. Our best line of defense is to slow down the spread in our community. This means staying at home as much as possible and, when you do go out, practicing physical distancing.
- My message today to you is simple: we still have the ability to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our city; and we have a collective responsibility to do all that we can to keep our loved ones and all of those who look after them safe and healthy.
- In closing, I want to extend my sincere thanks to my team at Toronto Public Health, at Toronto Paramedic Services and all of our essential service providers in our city, many of whom will be working throughout this long weekend, for their hard work and dedication to keeping our city safe. Please continue to stay home, stay safe and take care of each other.