

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**May 22, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.**  
**Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you Mayor Tory and good afternoon. Today there are 258 new COVID-19 infections in Toronto. To date, 6,998 people have recovered, an increase of 113 since yesterday. For more detailed data on COVID-19 in our city, please visit our website.
- Each day my team carefully monitors our local data and I'm disappointed to report that over the past 3 days, we have seen an increase in our local case numbers. It is important to remember that due to the time it takes to develop symptoms, get tested, and have those results reported to public health, any data I report to you today can reflect transmission from as long as 2 weeks ago, or more.
- When we see these changes in our data, we look to see why this may have happened, so that we can adjust our approach. In this case, our analysis thus far suggests that people may have acquired the virus during recent events where people traditionally spend time with their families, like Mother's Day. We need to keep monitoring our data to see if events like these or increased mixing of people related to reopening is creating more COVID-19 transmission in our city.
- It's understandable that people want to connect in person with their friends and loved ones. I do too. I am looking forward to the day where I can spend time with my mom and my friends in person instead of virtually. But we need to continue to be very careful as we move forward, so we don't find ourselves in a position where we have to go back. We all want to continue moving forward, especially now that the nice weather is here.

- This means continuing to practise physical distancing, and not gathering with people outside your immediate household at this time. I know this is difficult, and that you have all made personal sacrifices over the past several weeks. But we must stay the course so we can get to a point where we can connect safely in person with our friends and loved ones sooner.
- As we head into the weekend, we are approaching Eid and for many this is typically a time of celebration and gathering with family and friends. I know this is going to be difficult, but please do not host, or participate in gatherings this weekend.
- There are many creative ways to stay connected virtually and by phone. Many families have weekly group video calls to help them celebrate milestones and stay connected during these difficult times. Another way that many people have managed to feel connected with their loved ones is by having a physically distanced visit in-person from their doorstep. Thank you to everyone who has already made plans to connect with your loved ones virtually as you celebrate this weekend.
- On another topic as it relates to numbers, there continues to be confusion about testing targets and confusion among the public which I worry may be deterring people from going to get testing for COVID-19.
- Firstly, anyone who has one or more symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested at a local assessment centre. These symptoms can include a headache, sore throat, runny nose that does not fit with your typical seasonal allergies, loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain. If you or a family member are experiencing one or more of these symptoms, or you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but do not have symptoms yourself, I recommend that you should go and get tested.
- Increasing testing is critical as we move forward to COVID-19 recovery because it gives us a better picture of our local situation. It helps us identify people who test positive for COVID-19 and quickly isolate these individuals and their close contacts.

- While it is important to ensure that there are enough tests being performed, it is even better if those tests are being done as part of a testing strategy that informs our actions. A testing strategy helps us to focus our efforts on settings where we believe the virus is circulating. It also helps us to get ahead of problems, so we can reduce the risk of people being exposed to the virus and becoming sick and exposing others, and prevent outbreaks from occurring.
- At this time, from a public health perspective, we believe that based on how we would typically manage an outbreak, an optimal testing strategy has three components:
  - 1: Addressing current risk: this means testing people who have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, testing in outbreak situations and testing those who may be at increased risk of complications related to COVID-19.
  - 2: Addressing those at higher risk of COVID-19: this refers to testing people who may be at greater risk for acquiring COVID-19 such as close contacts of cases, as well as essential workers, healthcare professionals and other individuals with greater potential exposure to COVID-19.
  - 3: Broader population testing: this refers to casting the testing net wider to understand how a virus is moving through a community. This part of the strategy helps to identify people who might not have sought testing, before they start to show symptoms. We hope that in the near future this will also include blood testing to determine who in our community has already been infected with COVID-19 and may have some immunity.
- Lastly, on a positive note, earlier today I am pleased to announce that Toronto Public Health has partnered with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario to hire local registered nurses to support our case and contact tracing efforts. Through this partnership with the RNAO's COVID-19 VIANurse Program, the RNAO is actively recruiting registered nurses to join our case and contact management team for the next three months.



## Public Health

- I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the RNAO for their generous support, and look forward to welcoming our new colleagues to the Toronto Public Health family next week.
- In closing, the weather forecast certainly looks promising this weekend. I encourage you to find some time to get outdoors and enjoy fresh air and exercise, but I ask that you be wise about where you go so you are not running into crowds. Please do not socialize in group settings, especially indoors. Please continue to practise physical distancing, and please continue to take care of each other.

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