

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
July 22, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory and good afternoon. Over the past two days there have been 58 new COVID-19 infections in Toronto. To date, 13,584 people have recovered, an increase of 52 since Monday.
- COVID-19 has affected all of us in our own ways. However, some of the most devastating impacts thus far have been experienced by our loved ones living in long-term care and retirement homes.
- One of the first measures to protect staff and residents in these settings – and in many ways one of the most difficult - was stopping family and friends visits. This was a critical step to reducing the chance of visitors inadvertently bringing the virus into these settings. However, the impact of restricting access to our loved ones has been particularly hard.
- As Mayor Tory noted, effective today indoor visits to long-term care and retirement homes are now permitted with a two-person limit. As we witnessed throughout the pandemic, we need to be vigilant about making sure that we do everything we can to stop this virus from spreading in these settings.
- As I have shared many times before, my team and I continue to observe and learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions who are ahead of us in their outbreaks. We do this to apply these lessons locally to protect your health. Recently the media has reported an increase in COVID-19 activity in many jurisdictions that reopened a few weeks ago, like Alberta and British Columbia. These jurisdictions have noted that their residents were no longer having safe social interactions and have confirmed that COVID-19 activity has been linked to young adults who contracted this virus at celebrations at private homes and bars and restaurants.

- Locally, while our overall COVID-19 case numbers have decreased, new infections are still being reported every day. We are now seeing more 20 to 39 year olds getting COVID-19 compared to earlier in our outbreak. I am very concerned about this given recent trends amongst this age group in other jurisdictions.
- I am also concerned because I have heard that many people say that they believe that COVID-19 is over. I'm here today to tell you that this is simply not true. My message to you is that we must remain vigilant.
- Today I will walk you through our updated COVID-19 dashboard to show you why we must approach Stage 3 of reopening our city with caution. I know this news may be difficult to hear. However, my job is to give you the information you need to protect your health. And as much as I know we all want to get back to something resembling life before COVID-19, we are not there yet.
- **SLIDE 1:** Our overall dashboard status remains yellow. **SLIDE 2:** Some good news is that our overall health system capacity and **SLIDE 3:** public health capacity indicator categories remain green. **SLIDE 4:** In addition, the average percent positivity on COVID-19 tests is declining and **SLIDE 5:** new COVID-19 hospitalizations and outbreaks are also declining. This means that our public health measures are having a positive impact.
- However, there continue to be challenges experienced at the provincial labs with delays in test processing times. And, while overall COVID-19 case numbers have generally decreased in our city, new infections are still being reported each day and we have plateaued, with our 7 day moving average of new COVID-19 cases remaining consistently in the high 30s and low 40s.
- We have all worked so hard to get here and I do not want to lose our progress and our many sacrifices. This means we still need to continue carefully moving forward and observing the experiences of others who have reopened before us. Around the world the evidence points to the importance of a slow and steady reopening. This is why we asked for the province's Stage 3 order to consider enhanced safety measures for bars and restaurants, measures that apply lessons learned from other cities around the world.

- We continue to assess and reassess our local circumstances and will continue to identify ways to further enhanced Stage 3 orders based on what we know today from the best available science and the experiences of other jurisdictions.
- My team continues to monitor our local data to inform our actions as we move forward. We were pleased to launch new individual-level COVID-19 data on the City's Open Data platform earlier this month. The positive response and interest in this data has been tremendous. In an effort to ensure ongoing data quality, I wanted to let you know that we will not be publishing updated individual-level data today as my team is adding a new field that includes a unique identifier for each record so that those using the data will be able to track the same case information from one week to the next. So, the next update will be on July 29th.
- This weekend marks six months since we had our first positive case of COVID-19. At that time, it was hard to imagine how a pandemic would impact our community and the whole world. I know it has been incredibly difficult. Through this adversity though, our community has rallied and worked together to support and care for each other. It is a reflection and testament to the fabric of this city. It gives me hope and it makes me so proud to be a Torontonian and to serve you as your Medical Officer of Health.
- Finally, I wanted to take a moment to remind everyone of Ontario Health's pop-up COVID-19 testing clinic taking place today and on Friday from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Christian Centre Church at 4545 Jane Street. Thank you once again to our colleagues at Ontario Health for this important initiative.
- In closing, please remember that each of us plays an important role in reducing the risk for others and protecting our city. So please wash your hands, watch your distance, wear your mask, and please continue to take care of each other.