

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
August 24, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Lenore and good afternoon everyone. Today, there are 33 new COVID-19 infections in Toronto. To date, 14,350 people have recovered, an increase of 21 since yesterday.
- First, today I am pleased to share that our provincial colleagues at Ontario Health are supporting community pop-up testing sites in our city again this week. Testing will be available at the Sheridan Plaza parking lot, located at 2200 Jane Street, on Thursday from 3 to 7 p.m. and at the Jane Finch Mall parking lot, located at 1911 Finch Avenue West, on Friday from 3 to 7 p.m. Thank you once again to our colleagues at Ontario Health and to the community leadership in the Black Creek and Downsview areas for this important initiative.
- We've now been in Stage 3 of the provincial reopening framework for nearly a month, and I'm pleased that Toronto continues to see lower COVID-19 numbers in our city.
- This is good news for us, but we can't take this progress for granted or mistake it as back to normal. We're not and we must remember that.
- There are still about 20 or so new infections reported locally daily. My team and I are watching what is happening in other cities that have reopened before us. Please know that we still need to be very careful and continue follow our public health advice. The importance of this cannot be over-stated.
- We anticipate some increases in COVID-19 activity as people are moving around and resuming activities that were paused in earlier months. We also know from the experiences of other cities in Canada and around the world, that rates will climb back up unless we keep following the public health measures we've put in place to keep everyone safer.



Public Health

- With this in mind, today I'll share a brief update on:
 - Our data story during the first wave of this pandemic;
 - Actions we took to protect your health and save lives; and
 - What we learned to inform our planning to keep everyone safer as we move forward living with this virus.
- Since we had our first COVID-19 case on January 25, there have been 15,808 people diagnosed with COVID-19 in our city. My team has followed up with each of these individuals and their close contacts to collect information. Of these COVID-19 cases, 14,350 people have recovered and tragically, 1,165 people have died.
- Our data tells us how COVID-19 is impacting residents and is informing our planning for future virus activity. To-date, approximately 90% of residents have recovered from their illness, and 12% were hospitalized. Just under 3% were admitted to intensive care units. Sadly 7.5% of people infected with the virus died.
- Overall, most of the COVID-19 infections in Toronto were attributed to close contact with someone who was infected with the virus.
- It is also important to remember that we learned that COVID-19 has had a greater impact on the people in our community who face greater health inequities and in households that could be considered lower-income.
- Through our analysis, we know that the median age of people infected with this virus in Toronto was 44 and males and females were affected relatively equally.
- Over these past months, my team and I have done our very best to protect your health and save lives. As our situation changed we scaled up our local response and we acted to:
 - Expand our case and contact management function significantly;
 - Build a new data system to help us to manage an unprecedented outbreak in scale and in magnitude; and

--Conduct area-based data analysis to determine if the virus was impacting some groups more than others and target specific prevention measures to keep these residents safer.

- Since then, as a result of the steps we took and the way the people of Toronto responded, local cases declined steadily. And so when the time was right for our circumstances locally, we were able to join other parts of the province in Stages 2 and 3 of reopening.
- During this time we've been working hard to prepare for a safer reopening of our city. We've developed many guidance documents to support businesses and community services, from restaurants and hair salons to community services and amenities like libraries. Our guidance documents address the unique circumstances of each of these settings, who've all had to adjust how they operate to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- We also took additional measures to protect your health by:
 - Implementing new mandatory mask bylaws in indoor public settings;
 - Setting out clear requirements for the safer reopening of restaurants and bars;
 - Working with local school boards on measures to keep staff and students safer when schools reopen; and
 - Continuing to collaborate with the province, who are the lead for testing, to support targeted COVID-19 testing in areas of our city with increased virus activity.
- I know this pandemic has disrupted almost every aspect of our lives. I know that we are all feeling COVID fatigue and we would like to put this pandemic behind us.
- I also know that so many people in Toronto and around the world are experiencing immeasurable losses as they mourn loved ones who lost their lives to this virus. It is a small consolation, but so far we have avoided much worse situations observed in other jurisdictions.
- We want it to stay that way. The reality is, all of us have to live with this virus and be very careful to prevent virus spread until effective treatments and

vaccines are available. We must remember there are many jurisdictions that have had to take steps back after reopening. I don't want this to happen in our city. And it doesn't have to if we all think about what we're doing, how it keeps us healthy and how our decisions affect people around us.

- This highlights the continued importance of taking our public health measures seriously: to wash our hands, watch our distance, and wear our masks. These measures are simple ways we can all take care of each other. This is also why I think it is critical for us to pause and reflect on what we have learned, how things have changed, where we are today, and how we can try our very best to keep everyone as safe as possible as we live with this virus.
- As Mayor Tory shared last week, our COVID-19 data story has shifted. We are now seeing an increase in younger people becoming infected with this virus in our city. Over the past two weeks we have seen higher proportions of cases among people under 40, this includes people who are 20 to 39 years of age, and 19 years of age and younger. I have also heard that many young people believe that they are not vulnerable to severe illness from this virus. I have heard this firsthand. As I have shared with you before, and this message bears repeating, this virus knows no boundaries: not income, not race, and not age.
- You may believe that because you are young and otherwise healthy, you will not suffer severe illness from COVID-19, but just last week I was very sad to learn of Quebec's first death in a person under the age of 20. This person was otherwise healthy before getting infected with this virus. This is tragic proof that COVID-19 can impact anyone, at any age, with devastating consequences.
- In closing, we all have a role to play to help our city stay safer. So please, continue to wash your hands, watch your distance, wear your mask, and take care of each other. I would now be pleased to answer your questions. Thank you.