

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
August 26, 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, 14,401 people have recovered, an increase of 32 since yesterday.
- These lower case counts are good news, but we are still seeing new infections reported daily in the double digits. Over the last week we've seen 198 new infections in our city.
- The virus is still here and this emphasizes why we need to be careful and keep following our public health measures: wear your mask. Wash your hands. Keep six feet apart from others.
- We are at a critical time in this pandemic and I need your help. I'm asking you to listen and take note so you can help protect each other, so we don't lose our progress fighting this virus. We're going to be living with this virus for the foreseeable future, so it is critical that everyone understands that this is a marathon and not a sprint. We still have a long road ahead of us and we need to be careful.
- In a perfect world we'd see a decline until we have no new cases. This isn't feasible right now given the size of our city, how contagious the virus is, and because work is still underway to develop effective treatments but this work is not done yet. We can still keep learning from what is happening in other cities to do better and to keep our numbers low. And most importantly, we can keep trying our best to keep taking care of each other.
- As we look at cities in western Canada, in the US and around the world, we are reminded every day that this pandemic is not over. In British Columbia and Alberta there are increased in COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations linked to social gatherings. As people start to move around and travel again,



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places that had low case counts earlier this year are experiencing their biggest daily case counts since April. This is very concerning.

- The reality is that there are many months of this pandemic still ahead of us. As we learn to live with this virus, our goal in Toronto continues to be clear: we all need to do our very best to minimize the onset of new cases.
- Throughout this pandemic my public health colleagues and I have urged you all to wash your hands, keep your distance and wear your mask. These three simple steps are absolutely critical if we want to minimize COVID-19 spread in the months ahead.
- Just as I asked at the beginning of this pandemic, I'm calling on everyone to do absolutely everything you can to keep reducing the spread of the virus. This means washing your hands, watching your distance, wearing your mask and staying home when you're sick.
- I know this has been a difficult year and like no other time we've experienced in our lifetime. I think it's safe to say that we all think about how different our lives were at this time last year. I know I do. However, it is important to find enjoyment and joy in these unprecedented times, and as part of my update today I would like to talk about safe socializing during COVID-19.
- It's important that we all understand the difference between a social bubble or social circle and physically distanced socializing, and what our new normal looks like until we have a treatment, or vaccine for this virus.
- Since reopening I continue to hear firsthand that people believe we can now go back to normal. I also hear there is confusion on what safe socializing looks like and whether we still need to take precautions when connecting with our friends and families in person.
- We know from observing other cities around the world that unless we all embrace our personal responsibility to keep our distance from others outside our social bubble and wear our masks, we will see increased COVID-19

infections in our city. We've come a long way together to get our numbers to the low double digit range thanks to your commitment.

- But your actions now will affect COVID-19 activity in the weeks and months ahead, throughout the late fall and into the winter. So please listen carefully.
- Connecting regularly with family and friends is a cornerstone of our overall health and wellbeing. Throughout this pandemic I have strongly encouraged all of you to connect with each other and to take care of each other.
- I'd like to remind everyone of a few key points about social bubbles. First of all – if you belong in a social bubble, it's 10 people, or less. You can hang out with this group without masks indoors and outdoors, and you can hug people within your bubble. You must have agreement with everyone in this bubble to keep a distance from others outside the bubble to keep everyone safe.
- It is critical to remember that you can only belong to one bubble. This means that if you are socializing with friends and family outside of your bubble, you must keep a distance of 6 feet from them.
- Socializing safely with others outside of your bubble includes meeting in a park or getting together in someone's backyard, at a distance. And for those brief moments where you can't maintain a safe distance, please wear your mask.
- I know this year is not the same as other summers in our city, but we can still have fun. The other day my husband and I were invited to a friend's house for a physically distanced visit in their backyard. We hadn't seen them for a very long time.
- It was really nice to spend time together and catch up, but I will admit it did feel strange keeping at least 6 feet apart and not being able to hug them.
- I realize that socializing during a pandemic is difficult and maybe even awkward for some. We're used to hugging our friends when we greet them and sitting close to each other around a table to share a meal or a drink



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together. However, we're still learning to live with a highly contagious virus that is deadly for some, and that has profound lifelong impacts for others.

- We know we will have more COVID-19 activity in our city. The only way we will minimize our risk, is if we all keep doing our part. So please be careful and keep protecting each other.
- I want to take this opportunity to thank once again the members of our city's media for coming together and ensuring the public has the information they need to keep safe. As I have said many times before, I sincerely appreciate your help in sharing these important, time sensitive messages with our public.
- In closing, as you are outside enjoying these last days of summer, I ask that you please continue to wash your hands, wear your mask, watch your distance, and take care of each other so we can get through this together.

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