

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
September 23, 2020 at 4 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon everyone. Today I am reporting 129 new COVID-19 infections. This new count brings our total COVID-19 cases to 17,971. A total of 15,526 people have recovered from the virus.
- We were expecting some degree of increase in COVID-19 cases as we reopened our city and more people were interacting. We knew this because of what we saw in other places that were ahead of us in their outbreaks.
- The resurgence of COVID-19 is concerning to everyone. You will be concerned as you figure out how to be safe and live your daily lives with this virus.
- The City is concerned as it works to sustain life in our city within the realities imposed by the presence of COVID-19.
- My team and I are concerned with what we can do to limit the impact of COVID-19 and what I can do to persuade you to take the steps for self-protection: watching your distance, wearing a mask, washing your hands, limiting your in-person contact as much as possible. And to take these steps consistently when human nature makes it easy to find an excuse not to.
- We all have to do these things. They will work. But everyone needs to choose to do them so they can work.
- It's this simple: the virus needs to move from one person to another to keep replicating. If we keep distance, wear our masks and wash our hands, the virus has fewer and fewer places to go and it begins to die out.
- It won't be right away, but with sustained commitment, the infection rate will drop.

- Another thing that I want to tell you today is that we have made an important change to our website.
- We have updated our COVID-19 dashboard to include new information. I think you are going to find these changes to be really valuable. For example, now numbers are presented to show changes since the last update.
- The numbers are organized to tally up overall new case counts, new hospitalizations, new outcomes as cases resolve and new outbreaks.
- The cumulative figures since the pandemic began remain available as part of the dashboard. There is also detailed outbreak information.
- I'm pleased that my team has updated our dashboard based on feedback from the public and from local experts. I feel confident the information and content format represents an improvement of high value. I encourage you to visit it to stay informed.
- The infections logged on the dashboard are coming from the activities that people choose to do. Unfortunately, many of those choices are driving the case count upward.
- Our experiences this fall will be the result of how we live in a world with COVID-19. So what does limiting your in-person contact with others look like? It means limiting contact to those you live with. It means reserving contact with others as much as you can to essential areas such as work and school.
- It is not too late to reverse the trend of rising infections. However, we have a particular challenge ahead with many important holidays that typically include large gatherings of family and friends.
- Thanksgiving is just around the corner. We know that this holiday is a time of gatherings and celebration. I'm asking everyone to think about this event now and to plan ahead.



Public Health

- As I told you in my last update, life has changed and all of us have to act like it so we don't make the spread of COVID-19 worse. We need to change for the time being, to help us to get through these tough times together.
- Whenever family is involved, change usually involves complex and often sensitive conversations. I understand that. This is why everyone needs to start thinking about how to celebrate important days in a way that keeps us all safer.
- COVID-19 spreads when given the chance. Close contact with extended family and friends on important holidays could drive our numbers up.
- I know it's a big ask. It's hard to do things differently and can be complicated to figure out how. But this year following tradition is not the best thing to do. I encourage you to talk to your family and make a clear plan in advance on how to mark the occasion of Thanksgiving in a way that limits in-person contact with others from outside your home.
- In this and all things: Do not let your guard down. Taking steps for self-protection will produce the results we want as we fight the virus on two fronts.
- The choices we make as individuals have a huge impact. The case count tells us that. The policy choices made by governments at all levels are designed to create conditions to make it harder for the virus to spread.
- In that respect, I commend the province on their recent announcement to limit the size of private social gatherings across Ontario. This action will help to prevent virus spread.
- We will keep working with the province to identify ways to strengthen these conditions to fight COVID-19. I also support the province's efforts to provide testing while recognizing that there is a need for a focused testing strategy to maximize outcomes.



Public Health

- Please support these efforts by being serious about keeping your distance from people you don't live with. Please keep watching your distance, wearing your mask, and washing your hands often.
- These are powerful tools. When used together in sequence, these three actions make it hard for this virus to spread. There is an end in sight. We will get through this. But we all need to keep doing our part and to keep taking care of each other.

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Media contact: Lenore Bromley, Toronto Public Health, 416-338-7974,
Lenore.Bromley@toronto.ca