

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

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- Thank you Mayor Tory and good afternoon everyone. Before I begin today's update, I am pleased to share that our provincial colleagues at Ontario Health are supporting another pop-up testing site in our city this week.
- Testing will be available at Shoreham Park, located at 2 Shoreham Court, this Friday from 1 to 6 p.m. Thank you again to the community leadership in the Black Creek area and Ontario Health for this important initiative.
- In Toronto we continue to see new COVID-19 activity. Our local numbers are starting to increase again with 48 new COVID-19 infections since yesterday. This week alone in Toronto there have been 123 infections. This is concerning for all of us.
- As I shared in my last update, it isn't a matter of if we'll see more COVID-19 activity in our city, it's a matter of when. I'm concerned because this is what we're now starting to see.
- We need to be careful and vigilant in our actions to keep each other safe as we return to school, our workplaces, and spend more time inside as cooler weather arrives.
- As we approach back to school, it often feels like a natural fresh start for many of us. So for today's update I'll share my advice for a safer return to school and safer socializing.
- Back to school is a time of year typically filled with excitement. This year, many are feeling uneasy about this. Some may be worried about their child's ability to follow directions for physical distancing and wearing a mask. Others may be concerned about bringing the virus home to grandparents or other vulnerable relatives.

- I've been asked if I'm sending my kids back to school this fall. The answer is yes, however, my youngest is in high school so the decision is a little simpler for my family. I know that everyone needs to make decisions that are best for their children and unique family circumstances.
- For some who live with elderly family members or have health conditions, these decisions aren't necessarily straightforward.
- If you are sending your kids back to school there are ways to help them prepare:
  - Help them practice wearing a mask at home, so they can get comfortable with this before going into the classroom;
  - Teach them how to put their mask on properly, how to wear it and how to take it off;
  - Make sure your child's mask fits comfortably and covers their nose, mouth and chin;
  - Send at least two clean masks with your child to school each day and explain to them when they should change their mask;
  - Send two bags to store clean and dirty masks separately; and
  - Remind your child not to share or trade their masks with their friends.
- You can also help prepare your kids by explaining how school will be different this year:
  - Teach them how to wash their hands, practice physical distancing and wear their mask;
  - Remind them you can sense a smile in someone's eyes even under a mask. So they should greet their friends with a big smile, a wave from a safe distance and not share their food or other personal items; and
  - Create a routine to screen your child for symptoms of COVID-19 before school each day.
- It's also important to watch for signs of stress or anxiety in your child. They may have a lot on their mind and they may or may not talk about it. Remind them that it's important to think about COVID-19 and their actions when they're at school, but let them know that it won't be this way forever.

- Let them know that it might be a little bit like looking both ways before crossing the street, or wearing your seatbelt, because it's all about their safety and good habits to protect them. Ask them about their day so they can share their feelings. For example they may be worried that a friend got too close, or that someone wasn't wearing their mask the right way.
- More than ever it's especially important to keep your children at home if they're sick. It's also very important for everyone to get the flu vaccine this fall.
- While many of us are preparing to send our kids back to school, many of us are also looking forward to squeezing in that last little bit of summer fun this weekend. While you are doing this, I ask that you please be careful while you are socializing. The choices we make this Labour Day weekend have the potential to affect us all in the weeks and months ahead.
- Our city has done well this summer in keeping virus spread down. This is because you followed our public health measures. It's also because we've been mostly socializing outdoors. But I don't want anyone to have a false sense of security.
- I know many believe that since they didn't get sick in these past months, that they are in the clear and that they can go back to life as it was before COVID. This simply isn't true. It's also dangerous to think this way. This virus is very infectious and easily passes between people, especially when you're indoors.
- And you may not know if you're infected with COVID-19, or if the person next to you is infectious. It's on all of us to proceed with an abundance of caution to reduce virus spread as we head into the fall. We must make sure that we don't unknowingly pass this virus to someone else.
- The person next to you might work in hospital or long-term care, or have a weaker immune system. This is exactly why each and every one of us must continue to do our part to help protect each other.



## Public Health

- I know that none of us envisioned the year we've had. I know we're all tired of physical distancing and sticking with one social bubble. I've heard that many people are now bending the rules or bursting their social bubble to spend time with more people.
- The fact is we're seeing COVID-19 infections in our city resulting from people choosing not to follow public health advice. Just this week, we identified new infections among people socializing indoors, without masks and at a close distance. These are exactly the kinds of situations that are contributing to virus spread in other parts of the country.
- You may believe that because you are younger and otherwise healthy, you may not suffer severe illness from this virus. But this is simply not true. We have all heard stories about young, otherwise healthy people getting sick with COVID-19 and suffering from profound fatigue for an extended time, amongst other longer-term effects.
- The truth is that the only safe way forward is to keep following our public health measures: wash your hands, watch your distance and wear your mask. Everyone doing their part is what has kept Toronto from experiencing outbreaks like we're seeing in other cities. I cannot emphasize enough just how critical our behaviour today is in determining what happens next.
- So I ask everyone to take a minute to consider how they may be bending the rules and to start today by resetting our habits. This will be critical to how we manage as a community in the next phase of this pandemic.
- This is the only way we can protect each other, our economy and make sure we don't go back to even more restrictive measures, as we did in the spring.
- So please, as you are outside and enjoying these last days of summer, I ask that you all take my advice seriously:
  - Stick to one bubble of up to 10 people;
  - Avoid crowds, closed spaces and close contact with people outside your bubble because the risk of infection is high;
  - Wash your hands;



## Public Health

- Watch your distance; and
- Wear your mask.

- And, as I have asked since the beginning of this pandemic, please continue to take care of each other.

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