

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
October 21, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon everyone. Today I am reporting 346 new COVID-19 cases. This new count brings our total since the pandemic started to 25,278. Today 128 people in Toronto are in hospital with COVID-19, 21 more than yesterday.
- A big part of outsmarting COVID-19 will be by getting a flu shot this year. And there's three ways to do this – through your doctor, at a pharmacy or at a one of our Toronto Public Health clinics.
- Our Toronto Public Health flu clinics are appointment only and must be booked online, or over the phone. I encourage you to choose the option that works best for you.
- Toronto Public Health is actually one of the smallest players in the delivery of the flu vaccine. It's been almost ten years since the flu vaccine became available in pharmacies. That access to flu shots started in Toronto in 2012-13.
- Since then, programs have expanded through workplaces and naturally many people get their flu shot during a visit to their own doctor. At Toronto Public Health we've been prioritizing clinics primarily for people in Toronto who face barriers to access. For example, between now and the end of December, we will be providing 60 flu vaccination clinics in shelters all around the city.
- Last year, at Toronto Public Health we administered a total of 7,621 flu doses. A far greater volume is delivered through doctors' offices, pharmacies and other kinds of flu shot programs.
- Each year about 30% of the population gets a flu shot. This year, COVID-19 has increased awareness of its importance, so this year we are expecting a higher demand, so we've extended the clinics through to the end of December.



Public Health

- Information on our 2020 flu vaccine clinics is available online and should be displayed on your screen now.
- Steps will be taken and COVID-19 protocols will be in place, to keep the clinics safe for clients and staff.
- The number of clients will be limited, to allow for physical distancing. Everyone is required to wear a mask indoors, with some exceptions, and Toronto Public Health staff will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Above all, if you feel unwell on the day of your appointment, don't come. The clinics do run through to the end of December, and there will be time to rebook.
- A flu vaccination is free for anyone six months of age and older who lives, works or goes to school in Ontario. A health card is not required at a Toronto Public Health clinic.
- Last year in Toronto, a total of 2,771 lab-confirmed influenza cases were reported to Toronto Public Health. This was higher than the previous five seasons and probably an under representation of the actual number of cases, because not everyone who gets the flu gets tested as well.
- My understanding from the province is that they have confidence in the supply of flu vaccine, but demand this year means getting your flu shot may require a little extra planning and patience.
- I encourage you to get a flu shot, at a convenient pharmacy, through your doctor, or by booking online at a Toronto Public Health flu vaccine clinic.
- Finally today, I want to return to numbers.
- Our percent positivity figure for Toronto – or the percentage of positive cases COVID-19 cases per 100 individuals tested in a given week is up.

Public Health

- Today, our percent positivity figure for Toronto is 4.4 per cent. It has increased 1.3 per cent since I spoke to you Monday, when it was 3.1 per cent.
- The figure could yet change because we find data for the most recent week can be incomplete, but I feel comfortable saying I have no basis to expect it will fall 1.3 per cent and that I am concerned that its upward climb is not over, especially when I look at COVID-19's renewed eruption in other countries.
- In the United States, daily cases reached 70,000 last week for the first time since July - that's 490,000 cases per week.
- A public health expert in Utah says that the state's health care system is at a breaking point.
- Today, Ireland began a national lockdown for six weeks. Non-essential businesses are being closed and the Irish people told to go no more than five kilometres from their homes except for work and other essential reasons.
- It's estimated that 150,000 people in Ireland will lose their jobs in a matter of days. The total number of cases in Ireland has risen by 75% since the beginning of September.
- Similar restrictions are being imposed for two weeks in Wales.
- Regional lockdowns are being imposed in parts of Spain and Italy.
- On Saturday, France will impose a nighttime curfew for four weeks on Paris and 9 other cities.
- In London on Saturday indoor socializing will be prohibited between people who don't live together. All of this worries me. It worries me a lot.
- There is nothing to prevent COVID-19 from catching fire here except the choices we make.

Public Health

- We are protected when we act in ways to keep apart as much as possible from people we don't live with, when we keep six feet distance from people we don't live with, when we wear masks and when we regularly wash our hands – when we do whatever it takes to make it harder for the virus to spread, because the virus needs us to keep on spreading. It cannot do anything without using us to do it.
- If it had the capacity to want – COVID-19 would want us exactly where we are right now: tired, frustrated, impatient and worn out with living like this.
- I know I'm out here urging you forward, asking for your patience, trying to strengthen your resolve but actually I'm just like you: I am as tired of living like this as everyone else.
- But it's my job not to be, so I'm not giving up on getting this right and I'm not giving up on you.
- We've all seen how generous Canadians can be. When disaster strikes, we're right there, stepping up. This disaster is different, because it seems endless and we're all trying to survive it.
- We're not going to let this get out of control, not if I can help it, but I need everyone to pitch in – especially on the days when you don't want to.

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