



Update on COVID-19

Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health

October 9, 2020 at 3:30 p.m.

Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

-
- Good afternoon, and thank you Mayor Tory. This is an important day for Toronto. Possibly the most important day in this fall's resurgence of the COVID-19 virus.
 - If we think of COVID-19 like a forest fire, the announcement today by the Provincial government is a firebreak.
 - We face a natural force poised to either burn out of control or to become something we have the ability to bring under control. Today's announcement is a dividing line.
 - We now have an opportunity to reduce and reverse the COVID-19 infection rate in Toronto.
 - An opportunity that comes at a sobering moment, with sobering numbers on which to reflect as we head into the Thanksgiving weekend.
 - I am reporting 350 new COVID-19 cases today. The new count brings our total cases since the pandemic started to 21,919. Today 95 people in Toronto are in hospital with COVID-19. 26 are in the ICU. And 12 are intubated.
 - In Toronto there have been almost 2,000 COVID-19 cases reported during the first 8 days of October. The figure represents almost 10% of all our cases since the beginning of the pandemic. In just 8 days.
 - We are now positioned to challenge the spread of COVID-19 but we cannot forget it is always ready to erupt – if we let our guard down in our daily lives.
 - It is likely there will still be several weeks of sobering news to come, but I think there is now reason to believe that through these temporary restrictions we can blunt the toll that resurgence will take.



- I know there are people who will feel the effects of this course of action much more than others. This is very much on my mind.
- As your Medical Officer of Health, I believe your good health is made up of many parts – not just your physical wellness, but your mental wellness, your ability to work, to earn, to support yourself and those you love.
- I know how much is being asked of those in the affected workplaces.
- You have my assurance that none of us in positions of responsibility have forgotten what we're asking of you.
- I will do all I can to help find ways to help you weather these temporary restrictions during the next few weeks.
- Still, it doesn't feel temporary if it affects you personally. So in the conversations ahead – with my peers and colleagues – I will speak up about what we've asked of you.
- I believe I will be heard and that you will be heard too.
- As difficult as it is in many respects, the actions poised to come into effect will make it harder for COVID-19 to spread, by reducing our ability to mix in situations that make it easier for the virus to spread.
- If we rob COVID-19 of that, a declining infection rate has to follow.
- The rest of us can show our respect – for those of whom we're asking so much – by acting in ways that will make it harder for COVID-19 to spread.
- That is what we need – reduced spread means lower infection rates, which means a healthier, safer Toronto, where people can work more, connect more, and live more.



Public Health

- But until then we have the next few weeks to get through and, in the next few days, Thanksgiving.
- My advice is that you are safest spending Thanksgiving only with the people you live with in your home.
- That isn't an easy ask of people who live alone and I'm sorry that I have to ask it.
- But if at all possible, connect virtually rather than in person. And if you must be with other people you don't live with, try to do it outside, always keep at least six feet apart, wear your mask as much as you can and wash your hands as much as you can.
- This will be a Thanksgiving most of us will always remember – and one we'd probably rather forget.
- I hope it's some consolation that what we have to do this weekend should give us something to be really thankful for this time next year and I hope you will take pride in knowing that you are doing the right thing.
- This weekend and in the weeks ahead, I ask you to always ask yourself these questions:
 - Is where I'm going something I need to do or something I want to do?
 - And if it's just something I want to do, can I put it off?
 - In either instance, what can I do to make it lower contact? Can it be outdoors, how much am I able to stay at least six feet apart from others, have I got my mask to wear?
- These things are important because the changes we're about to make in city life will take time to show results. Lower infection rates won't happen overnight.
- So the infection rates still to come over the next few weeks will require faith that we are on the right path.



Public Health

- We have seen, since reopening, the inevitable consequences of letting our guards down and living as if we're back to normal.
- That day has not come – not yet – but I believe it will, if we commit to living differently for now, in order to live normally again.
- Today is an important day as we act to contain and control COVID-19.
- We are all united in our desire to get COVID-19 under control. This is not the moment to breathe a sigh of relief but rather the time to take a deep breath – before we make up our minds to do what that takes.

-30-

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