

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
January 4, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

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- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon. I am reporting 974 new cases of COVID-19.
 - We have seen 3,061 new cases of COVID-19 in Toronto since the last time I reported to you in person on December 30th. 366 people in Toronto are in hospital. 98 are in the ICU. Sadly, we are also recording 9 more deaths since yesterday. In total, 38 lives have been lost since December 30th.
 - The figures today are unquestionably a call to action for all of us.
 - As individuals we must take every action we can to protect ourselves from COVID-19 infection.
 - Stay home and stay apart – whenever you can.
 - Our goal in January must be to limit spread – doing that relies in large part on us as individuals.
 - To do otherwise is to surrender one of our most powerful advantages against COVID-19.
 - Under the direction of the Board of Health, today the COVID-19 dashboard will include new information to further illustrate the characteristics of the virus in Toronto.
 - The website will provide more specificity about workplace related outbreaks across eleven categories, including workplace settings like grocery stores, pharmacies, food processing sites, offices, warehousing, shipping and distribution, construction, and manufacturing facilities.
 - Additionally, Toronto Public Health is implementing a system to share specific information about workplace outbreaks without compromising individual privacy.

- That information will be posted today and will be updated weekly on Thursdays.
- The criteria for disclosure include sustained transmission of COVID-19 in a workplace; where a significant proportion of staff have been involved in the outbreak; where there is significant duration of an outbreak and where the workplace is large enough that the risk of privacy concerns are mitigated.
- Toronto Public Health has previously always identified businesses where a public health risk exists.
- The application of these criteria provide a basis for further disclosure as directed by the Board of Health.
- Whatever the specific figures, at this point in the pandemic COVID-19 infection can be acquired anywhere and should be thought about as such.
- In Toronto, more than half of infections are resulting from close contact with a confirmed case.
- If COVID-19 gets into your home it is very likely it will spread through your home – so the best thing we can do is act to prevent it from getting there in the first place.
- Finally, Toronto Public Health is instructing all employers and businesses in the city to take additional actions and measures to reduce the spread of the virus.
- The most significant instructions include a requirement that businesses immediately notify Toronto Public Health as soon as they become aware of two or more employees with COVID-19 – and to designate a contact person to work with Toronto Public Health and immediately implement any measures that are required by us.
- Employers are required to minimize instances where more than one individual is travelling in a vehicle associated with the work of that business.

Public Health

- They must implement rigorous and frequent cleaning in all high-touch areas and areas accessible to the public, and ensure regular functional assessments of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.
- Employers will also be required to ensure that physical distancing of employees by at least two metres takes place throughout the workplace, where reasonably possible.
- As mentioned, employers are also required to ensure all employees are aware of any benefits and/or pay to which they may be entitled in the event COVID-19 makes it impossible for them to work as usual.
- These actions are meant to support employment, businesses and the economy during the pandemic by supporting conditions where people can work and do business in safer and healthier circumstances.
- With more infection prevention and control measures, with more distance and clearer lines of accountability there is greater capacity to manage public health while businesses operate in pandemic times.
- The one thing COVID-19 really can't endure is distance.
- These are distance measures in many respects.
- Distance of every kind is the greatest resource upon which we can draw in the next few weeks.
- Distance will produce results.
- The ability to create it lies within all of our hands at this critical time.