

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
March 31, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Chief, and good afternoon.
- Today, I am reporting 883 new cases of COVID-19 in Toronto.
- Including yesterday, the new case count totals 1,664.
- 29 new admissions bring the number of people in hospital to 330.
- On Monday, that figure was 302.
- At present, 53 people are in the ICU.
- I am sad to report that seven more people have lost their lives to COVID-19.
- The current number of cases screened positive for variants of concern is 8,570 – an increase of more than 800 since Monday.
- An estimated 80 percent of Toronto’s 160,000 health care workers have received at least their first dose of vaccine.
- And close to 100% per cent of residents of long term care and retirement homes are fully vaccinated.
- On our COVID-19 dashboard, we are now providing information on vaccine delivery by age group. Vaccine information on the dashboard will be updated on Mondays and Thursdays, and is based on the most current 2021 population data.
- There has been a lot of information put forward today by those of us who have presented thus far, so I will be brief.

- If the current situation is described as a race: the variants are ahead – by a mile.
- The religious holidays celebrated over the next couple of weeks create tempting opportunities to come together.
- But this is a dangerous time when you look at the rapid growth in case counts.
- If you gather as usual, you are taking a great risk.
- It is just an invitation to COVID-19 variants to spread.
- We know the variants are far more transmissible and cause much more serious illness.
- While the ability to infect is higher and the potential danger of illness is greater, how you get COVID-19 hasn't changed much at all.
- Being too close for too long in the wrong conditions especially with someone who doesn't know that they're contagious. There is a period when a person is contagious but doesn't know it – if indeed they ever get symptoms.
- The head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States said this week that she is scared.
- If the head of the CDC says something like that, she means it.
- And she's not alone.
- The healthcare community here at home is making their fears known too.
- I don't want anyone to panic or to feel hopeless. I do want you to act.
- You are, and always have been, your very best protection against COVID-19 and you are the best protection for everyone you care about.

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- At this point the vaccines are nowhere near close to providing widespread protection.
- If you've got yours, that's wonderful – but you are comparatively few in number at this point.
- We often say: celebrate safely.
- In this environment that means staying home, staying close only to those with whom you live, connecting digitally with those you don't, and, if outside your home, keeping at least six feet between you and those you don't live with and, finally, wearing your mask as much as you can.
- Please do not gather with anyone you don't live with.
- The best treatment is always prevention.
- COVID-19 prevention is critical this year and never more than now.

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