

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**March 24, 2021 at 10 a.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

---

- Thank you Chief Pegg, and good morning.
- Today I am reporting 484 new cases of COVID-19.
- 271 people are in hospital.
- 51 of them are in the ICU.
- Sadly, since Monday, seven more people have died from COVID-19.
- The current number of cases screened positive for variants of concern is 5,668.
- That is 240 more cases since Monday.
- As the Mayor referenced, Health Canada has approved four vaccines for Canada. Three are available in Ontario right now.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are being given to people through our mass vaccination clinics and by our hospital and health care partners.
- The AstraZeneca Oxford vaccine is available to people aged 60 and over, through a number of pharmacies and some family doctor's offices.
- The AstraZeneca Oxford vaccine has been a hot topic lately and as a result people may be concerned about it.
- I want to remind you that yesterday, Health Canada said that the AstraZeneca Oxford vaccine is safe.
- If the Astra Zeneca Oxford vaccine is what's in the needle when my turn for vaccination arrives, I will take it happily and without concern.

- The important thing is to be vaccinated when you are able to be vaccinated.
- The vaccines currently in use have been approved by Health Canada, having been through their careful and thorough review process.
- Health Canada's job is to take a long, hard look at the evidence and to review all the data from the clinical trials conducted. They do this to determine the results of receiving the vaccine and to decide whether the vaccine is safe.
- It's probably worth remembering that earlier this year there were some people wondering what was taking so long with the approval process.
- That's a reflection of how seriously Health Canada takes its work.
- We're told some people are afraid that there is COVID-19 in the vaccine.
- There isn't.
- None.
- Each vaccine helps your body create antibodies to COVID-19.
- They can provide protection when the COVID-19 virus mutates – and mutations happen regularly with viruses.
- Usually such mutations don't amount to much.
- But sometimes, as with the COVID-19 variants we're seeing right now, those mutations or changes in the virus can make it easier for the virus to spread.
- That's why it's important to get vaccinated when you can.
- Some people are concerned about vaccine side effects.

- Wherever you get your vaccine, you're kept for observation long enough after your shot to be confident that you're doing fine.
- If there are side effects, they are usually mild and go away after a few days.
- The most important thing to remember is that each vaccine is proven to prevent the worst kind of illness.
- Some people understandably have questions.
- There are credible places to go to get those questions answered: you can visit [toronto.ca/covid19](https://toronto.ca/covid19), you can call our Toronto Public Health hotline at 416-338-7600, you can speak with your pharmacist or your doctor, and of course you can always call Telehealth.
- If you have any doubt, ask – as part of being ready to take your turn to be vaccinated when the time comes, and so you can be confident in this valuable, safe and effective protection.