

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
March 29, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Chief, and good afternoon.
- Today I am reporting 670 new cases of COVID-19.
- 16 new admissions bring the number of people in hospital to 302.
- 53 people are in the ICU.
- We are reporting two more deaths to COVID-19, sadly.
- The current number of total cases screened positive for variants of concern is 7,752.
- When thinking about case counts, variants, and virus spread, I want to mention three things.
- First, between last Thursday and today, we have seen 4,155 new cases of COVID-19.
- Second, from last Thursday until today, 89 people have been admitted to hospital.
- And third, anecdotally, I am hearing from colleagues at Toronto hospitals that increasingly, admissions are of younger people and often directly to the ICU.
- Within our figure of 670 cases today, 227 are people between the ages of 20 and 39. That's just shy of 35 per cent.
- The data continue to paint a picture of worsening resurgence and escalating cases.

Public Health

- Add to that, Passover is underway. Good Friday and the Easter weekend are in just a few days. And Ramadan begins just one week thereafter.
- Unfortunately, our track record around holidays isn't very good.
- This past Christmas, the seven-day moving average was 660 cases. Two weeks later, it had increased to about 1,000 cases. People gathered and this caused the virus to spread.
- Now is not the time to gather. We are not well enough protected. There is no reason to believe that history won't repeat itself.
- In fact, we have every reason to believe that it could be worse, given the transmissibility of variants of concern.
- If you've been vaccinated, I want to remind you about something you will have been told the day you got your vaccination.
- The vaccines don't work instantly.
- The body needs time to create an immune response.
- But it doesn't happen overnight.
- It takes at least two weeks.
- So, in the days following vaccination, you will not have sufficient immunity to protect you immediately.
- We know that the vaccines approved for use in Canada will protect you from serious illness and death.
- We also know vaccination provides the path forward to all those activities that we have missed so much for more than a year now.

Public Health

- In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention recommends that it's OK for fully vaccinated people to be indoors with other fully vaccinated people and in those instances nobody has to wear a mask or watch their distance.
- The emphasis is on fully vaccinated.
- We know there aren't a lot of fully vaccinated people in Toronto yet.
- We'll get there, but we're not there now.
- For anyone who misses hugging someone else, anyone who wants to see their grandchildren grow year-over-year, anyone who wants to spend time close to someone else – without thinking about whether it's safe or not – the vaccines are the answer.
- If you've had yours, please don't gamble with it yet, especially with the variants dominating the infections in Toronto and case counts rising and particularly if it's just the first dose you've had.
- Have confidence in the protection the vaccines provide, but don't risk anyone's health quite yet.
- If you're waiting for your turn, don't forget, the only thing protecting you from COVID-19 right now is the steps you take to protect yourself.
- Getting your vaccine will protect you from all we've feared in the last year.
- Giving the vaccine time to work, and people time to get vaccinated, is the foundation of that protection.