

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
April 28, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Today I am reporting 1,055 new cases of COVID-19.
- 1,121 people are in the hospital.
- 242 people are in the ICU.
- I am saddened to report 13 deaths today.
- Yesterday I read some figures from Our World in Data, a research and data analysis center partnered with the University of Oxford.
- It listed Canada as having 30% of the population with at least one dose of vaccine.
- Only eight other countries in the world were ahead of us – and three of those are the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel, whose vaccination progress is the envy of the world.
- Here in Toronto we are seeing success in targeting the vaccine where it will produce the most effect under the current circumstances.
- It sometimes feels contradictory to speak to our success in the delivery of vaccinations, when there are still so many waiting their turn, and while the third wave is still so dangerous.
- That danger is why the approach we are taking makes the most effective use of the vaccine supply at our disposal.



Public Health

- Toronto Public Health, our hospital partners, and our community partners are all collaborating to deliver the doses we have to best advantage.
- We are confident that the current hotspot strategy delivers a double advantage. The strategy not only targets the neighbourhoods and demographics that are at greatest risk of infection, but also indirectly reaches into workplaces where it can be easy for COVID-19 to spread, as we know these neighbourhoods are often home to essential and frontline workers.
- In addition to the hotspot strategy, our hospital partners have conducted two pilot workplace vaccination campaigns in Toronto.
- We are actively working with our vaccination partners to review these pilots, and together, will make decisions on next steps when we have more vaccine supply.
- While we often speak of neighbourhoods at greatest risk, we are well aware these are not the only places facing risk.
- Everyone in Toronto has shared fear, disruption and risk from COVID-19, even if we often experienced these things in different ways.
- As a matter of public health, we need and want everyone in Toronto, wherever you live, to be vaccinated against COVID-19.
- There is almost nowhere in the world that does not share the same need that we have – to acquire sufficient vaccine.
- We are now seeing that there are places in the world where the vaccines have been so extensively delivered, that the signs of their power over COVID-19 are clear and reassuring.
- In the United Kingdom the government is proceeding cautiously toward more normal life after months of intense restrictions and intense vaccination.

- Almost 65 per cent of Britons 18 years of age and older have received a first vaccination.
- Yet, at the same time, the government is under political and popular pressure to move faster and to reduce restrictions sooner.
- This impatience, while understandable, may result in serious consequences.
- All eyes will be on the UK as it moves ahead, to observe which path it follows and what follows from the path it chooses.
- The same is true of the United States. In the U.S. the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published information about what vaccinated people can do now, including yesterday's announcement that fully vaccinated people don't need to wear masks outdoors except in crowded settings.
- Still, the emerging flexibility in American daily life is modest in many states.
- At the same time, variants, aggressive relaxing of public health measures, and COVID fatigue are factors in a noticeable resurgence in some states and amongst young people who haven't yet had access to vaccine.
- There are lessons in the experiences of those who are ahead of us in the long march toward a more usual way of living.
- Each step we take as individuals during this stay-at-home order will determine whether we will outpace the risk of COVID-19 or if COVID-19 will outpace us.
- This is in effect like walking a tight rope.
- A tightrope walker was quoted as saying that the most dangerous part of the walk was "when you have to turn, because that is the only moment when you take your eyes off where you're heading, and that's when you really risk falling."
- If we lose sight of where we could wind up back where we started – again.

- The cautions I raise are to say: always remember that however difficult and unpredictable and frustrating the path can be at points, we are moving in the right direction.
- And never forget that as we move in that direction we have to keep focus on the risk of spread, until everyone has reached safety.

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