

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
May 3, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Chief Pegg, and good afternoon.
- As announced last week we have altered our reporting over the weekends, so the figure for new cases I'm reporting today is cumulative for the past three days.
- The daily average across those three days is 1,037 cases.
- The cumulative total for the three day period is 3,111.
- As of today 1,142 people are in the hospital.
- 272 people are in the ICU.
- I am saddened to report 31 deaths during the past three days.
- We are on the verge of a significant expansion of vaccine access in Toronto.
- The Mobile Sprint Strategy, which the Mayor referred to, is making an important difference and the pop-up clinic campaigns were vital to it.
- Nothing matters more than people coming out for vaccination.
- So thank you to everyone who took the personal responsibility and rightly trusted the science to get out there and get a shot at a pop up clinic – or any clinic for that matter.
- And thank you to everyone who got those shots into people's arms: our hospital and Ontario Health Team partners, the vaccinators who put those needles into arms, and the community leadership who are so effectively reaching into their communities.

- Together you inspired and rallied the confidence in the people who live there to roll up their sleeves and take steps to get vaccinated to protect themselves, protect their communities and by extension to help protect this whole city.
- We know that first doses go a long way to raising initial defenses in your body against COVID-19.
- While we enjoy the good fortune of having these vaccines available – we can't take them for granted and I have to raise a caution today now that we've crossed the 40 per cent mark and as access to booking expands.
- It's this, an important thing to remember: the first dose is not full protection.
- The vaccines work by providing instructions to your body to produce an immune response.
- This includes making antibodies so that your body is prepared and ready to identify the threat and overcome it.
- Your cells form a memory of how to do this.
- The second dose is a vital boost to what the body learned from the first dose.
- It reminds the cells what they learned, and they mount a response again.
- From that point, you are better ready to fight COVID-19 if the virus tries to infect you.
- There is emerging concern in the United States that people are opting to avoid their second dose, so confident are they in the protection of their first dose.
- It's important not to take the protective power of the vaccines for granted, especially soon after the first vaccination.

- We see this in some COVID cases where a person with one vaccination nonetheless becomes infected.
- It isn't common but it isn't impossible.
- Completing the two-dose regimen helps the body learn and strengthens its ability to subdue COVID-19.
- We continue to learn more about the vaccines as more and more are delivered all around the world.
- For example, we are learning how long the vaccines provide protection.
- We're starting to see evidence that in addition to preventing serious illness the vaccines can prevent transmission from one infected person to another.
- And there is more and more evidence that asymptomatic transmission is prevented with the vaccine.
- The benefits of a mix and match approach to vaccination is under active study to determine the benefits – medicine is confident that mixing one vaccine for the first dose and a different vaccine for the second isn't going to harm you.
- We are however learning what the benefits of such an approach might be.
- The vaccines will lead us out of the pandemic but they are not an instant solution.
- We can look at places like the U.K. and rightly expect in the near future to enjoy the same kind of progress that they're making.
- But in the meantime while COVID-19 rates remain very high in Toronto, it remains important to limit your contact with other people you don't live with; to be outside with them, not inside if you have to connect with them; and to wear your mask when you can't keep six feet apart.



Public Health

- Good distance and good ventilation and wearing a mask are what you need to know most right now, whether you are newly vaccinated or waiting for your turn.

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Media contact: tphmedia@toronto.ca