

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
June 23, 2021 at 9 a.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good morning.
- Because we're coming to you earlier than usual, today's numbers will be updated and found on our dashboard later this afternoon.
- Overall though, the numbers show that we've come a long way in a short period of time because so many of you have done the wise thing and protected yourself through vaccination.
- There is a lot of change and new information in constant circulation about vaccine program – things like where to get a dose and when you will be eligible for a second vaccine.
- But, what's important to remember are a few basic points.
 - All vaccines available are tested, safe and highly protective against COVID-19.
 - The vaccines are holding well against the current challenges created by the variants, including the Delta variant.
- Vaccines usually require more than one dose, so the two-dose requirements for Moderna, Pfizer or AstraZeneca are not unusual.
- What is important is completing your two-dose vaccination.
- More than anything – right now – the best course of action is to get your two doses of vaccine and to take the vaccine available to you when you are eligible.
- The current Sprint Strategy has supported the provision of vaccines to 22 parts of the city where risk of COVID infection is highest.



Public Health

- Just about half have reached vaccine coverage of 70%, meeting the provincial Science Table's benchmark for one dose or more in people aged 18 years or older.
- The focus on these areas will continue in earnest to improve these numbers and increase the level of protection in residents.
- Wherever we live, we all share the need to be fully vaccinated.
- The more people we have fully vaccinated the harder it gets for variants like Delta to spread.
- The more people we have who are unvaccinated, the likelier it becomes that a new variant will develop – potentially with the ability to threaten the protection we've got against COVID-19 – and all the progress we're making towards reopening.
- Right now in Toronto, we have mostly mRNA vaccines made by Moderna and Pfizer.
- Pfizer is best known, probably because the manufacturer's name is familiar, and because for a long time Pfizer was delivering a prominent amount of the vaccine we were using for vaccinations.
- Had the supply situation been reversed, Toronto Public Health, the hospital teams and all the other vaccination partners would have happily and confidently used Moderna if it had been available in greater amounts earlier in the vaccination campaign.
- A colleague of mine at Toronto Public Health characterizes the two mRNA vaccines as twins.
- Earlier this week, the Globe and Mail described them like different kinds bottled water. The name on the bottle might be different, but the contents are essentially the same. So in the end you're getting the same thing and that's the case with mRNA vaccines.

- Different names, different manufacturers, but built on the exact same foundation.
- mRNA vaccines are likely to become very familiar to us.
- Remember, the first successful vaccinations were against smallpox in the late 1790s.
- While new to use, mRNA vaccines have been in study and development for 30 years.
- mRNA is to vaccination and to medical researchers what smartphones are to cellphones and to you and me – researchers have taken something we're familiar with and made it better – as a result of imagination, development and careful, rigorous testing.
- Sooner or later, we're going to be mixing with one another much more than we have in a very long time.
- And this is great. It's what we have all waited for.
- It will not change the facts that we must accept.
- Despite everything, COVID-19 is still circulating and can still infect.
- COVID-19 – especially the Delta variant – is still a force to be reckoned with.
- You want to avoid this and you can.
- We are so fortunate in Toronto right now.
- We continue to receive supplies of mRNA vaccines and have a large number of places where you can get vaccinated. We also continue to see unprecedented demand, and many people want their vaccine as soon as possible.



Public Health

- On the plus side, the wait between the first dose and the second is reduced. As we approach the next phase on the province's roadmap to reopening, more mixing between people lies ahead.
- This means more opportunities for the virus to spread. Therefore, we can expect to see case counts rise.
- If you don't want to be one of them, please get vaccinated.
- There's never been a better time.

-30-

Media contact: tphmedia@toronto.ca