

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
June 9, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Today I am reporting 117 new cases of COVID-19.
- 706 people are in the hospital.
- 203 people are in the ICU.
- I am saddened to report 12 deaths today.
- Many are wondering what the Delta variant means for our immediate future, since we're on the verge of entering Phase One of the Province's reopening plan.
- Torontonians will be able to enjoy some things that we have been missing for so long.
- In my view Toronto is on a solid path forward – though a narrow path – while we watch what the Delta variant does here.
- The Delta variant is a force to be reckoned with; more transmissible, more infectious.
- We at Toronto Public Health and our partners across the City remain ready to respond quickly should the need arise.
- And certainly with the Delta variant here, we will want to do two things in particular: increase first and second dose vaccine coverage, and proceed selectively in daily life.
- After all these months, I think most people are inherently cautious.

- Just because you can do something, doesn't mean you have to.
- In the United Kingdom, pubs reopened with huge enthusiasm and the streets were packed. But then, the number of pub-goers pulled back for a while.
- It's natural for people to test the waters and it would not be surprising to see the same kind of behaviour here.
- Going forward and over time, we have a lot to get used to.
- Certainly each "next" phase or step of the reopening plan occurs only so long as COVID is minimized, so that's a factor to think about and our collective goal over the next several weeks.
- There are currently 122 confirmed cases of the Delta variant here in Toronto.
- That may not sound like a lot, but the confirmation process is complex and takes time, and moreover, we have seen what happens when a variant suddenly explodes.
- The good news is that evidence from other parts of the world proves the vaccines are holding strong against the Delta variant and are continuing to protect people, particularly with two doses of vaccine.
- I often talk about the situation in the UK because their experience is a good example of the challenges that we may face and the choices before us.
- Public Health England says Delta is now the dominant strain there, replacing B1.1.7.
- Total case counts jumped 90 per cent in the last week.

- Their health minister now says the next phase of their reopening, currently set for June 21, may be delayed. He also said the Delta variant is 40 per cent more transmissible than the B1.1.7 variant.
- Providing the basis for cautious optimism, Public Health England produced a study that found that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was 88 per cent effective against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant two weeks after the second dose, and that 2 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were 60 per cent effective.
- It also found – and I offer this as a caution for us – that with just one dose both vaccines were 33 per cent effective against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant.
- So far in the U.K. over 40 million people have had a first vaccine dose – that's 75 per cent of the adult population – and more than 28 million – or a little over 40 per cent – have had a second.
- So you can see how the Delta variant can surge.
- In Toronto just over 72 per cent of residents over 18 years of age have had one dose of vaccine. Only 11 per cent have had two doses.
- B1.1.7 is still the dominant variant detected here – another highly transmissible variant that started quietly and then exploded.
- That was what we saw in the third wave that is now waning.
- At points during the pandemic we all worried that Toronto's hospitals would be overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases.
- We all saw hospital systems – like in Italy and the United States – that collapsed or came close to it, because the number of infected people overwhelmed the system.

- The same number of sick people that can overwhelm a hospital is the same number of people that can overwhelm case and contact management.
- It's a number of people so big that it requires we switch to major public health measures that limit contact between all people – not just those who are sick and their contacts.
- Our lowered case count allows Toronto Public Health to deploy case and contact management where we locate and engage with confirmed cases and their contacts.
- Our ability to reach both categories within 24 hours is high.
- Between June 2 and 4, for example, we successfully reached 97.2 per cent of newly reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 within this window and 83.7 per cent of newly reported contacts.
- We are confident we will continue to improve this contact rate as long as the comparatively low number of cases continues.
- But, as with so many other things, a lot is at the mercy of case counts. This is where we each have our part to play.
- COVID-19 is a nimble virus and doesn't seem ready to go away quickly or easily.
- We are nearing the finish line – we don't want to turn it into an obstacle course.
- So please, if you have not made arrangements for your first dose of vaccine, I ask you to do so.
- When your turn comes to get your second dose, please take it.



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- If you've had a first dose don't overestimate its protective power. These are two dose vaccines for a reason; I ask that you please make it your mission to show up for both.
- The things we hope for this summer are still reasonable hopes – but with variants in the background, our challenge now is not to wait for those things, but to protect them.

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