

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
July 14, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Today there are 30 new cases of COVID-19. Sixty-five people are in the hospital and 25 people are in ICU. I'm sorry to say that there have been four more deaths from COVID-19.
- For all the good news these days, these deaths are a reminder that while we are moving in the right direction, we have not yet arrived.
- The first thing I want to address today is the concept of receiving a combination of two different vaccines as many, many people have already done in Toronto.
- There has been some confusion following comments on Monday by an official of the World Health Organization. She was responding to a question about the need for future booster shots.
- Since then, her answer is sometimes being repeated as if she was talking about the mixing and matching of first and second doses. She was not.
- She was describing what would happen if people decided to try to get a booster on their own and did not rely on medical advice.
- In Ontario we follow the advice of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, which makes its recommendations on the basis of the best available evidence.
- On this subject this includes studies from the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany that found that mixing vaccines is safe and produces a strong immune response.
- I myself received Pfizer for my first dose and Moderna for my second, and I can assure you that I'm very comfortable that I am protected.

- The most important thing you can do right now is to be fully vaccinated and especially to get your first dose if you haven't already done this yet.
- Some of the earliest advice still holds true: the best vaccine is the vaccine you can get and we're fortunate that there are lots of options now on where to get your vaccine.
- In Toronto we continue to make good progress in vaccinations, and we are on the cusp of an important opportunity.
- The next two weeks are critical to youth vaccination and the return to school in September.
- Vaccines delivered in the next two weeks will be done in time to ensure 28 days passes between first and second dose, followed by the two important weeks to develop fulsome immunity.
- Torontonians have embraced vaccination so thoroughly all these weeks and months, I really hope that our young people will embrace this moment, too.
- Elsewhere, there are some areas that need focus, by age and location.
- By age, those 35 to 49 are still inching upward far more slowly than I would wish.
- The first dose coverage for them still sits in the low seventies and we've got to see that move substantially higher, for everyone's benefit.
- By location, the push is on particularly in regions to the north and west areas of the city, as you heard the Mayor say. This area really felt the burden of the pandemic. Many of the people who staff the services we all rely on call it home.
- For everyone's sake we need to close that vaccination gap and we're doing so through a number of means, including increased mobile clinics that take the vaccines where they are most needed.

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- The higher we drive the levels of vaccination the harder it gets for COVID-19 to mutate and create the next variant.
- By maximizing our vaccine coverage, we protect our return to the things we have held on for – the things we've sacrificed for.
- This Friday we enter stage three of reopening.
- So to be consistent with the province's direction, I am recommending that Toronto City Council during its current meeting repeal two of the by-laws put in place as part of the COVID-19 response in Toronto.
- Specifically, these are the by-laws governing restaurants and other food service settings and the requirement for physical distancing between people in parks and public squares.
- I am recommending to Council that for the time being the current mask by-law requiring mask wearing in indoor public spaces and the by-law on certain requirements in shared spaces at apartments and condominiums, continue.
- I am looking forward to Friday, for all of us.
- Although in the excitement, I want to urge you to not confuse the coming changes and increased choices with a green light to forget the last 18 months.
- All that's about to happen is a wonderful and long awaited opportunity for each of us to do more and to live more fully – while remembering what we've learned in the last 18 months and accepting the virus is still here, even as we move in the right direction.