

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
October 20, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory and good afternoon. Today, our case counts in Toronto remain relatively low – even after in-person learning for tens of thousands of students has resumed for a number of weeks now.
- There is cause for cautious optimism, while we are still waiting to see the full impact of Thanksgiving on the rate of COVID-19 infection in our community.
- With this in mind, there are a few things I would urge you to start thinking about and acting on in the coming weeks.
- First – flu shots. When they become widely available in November – please get one.
- As usual, Toronto Public Health will run campaigns and clinics including in Toronto Public Health mass immunization clinics. This is in addition to all the flu vaccines that will be given at pharmacies and in doctors' offices.
- You should also know that it is safe to get a flu vaccination and a COVID-19 vaccination – even a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine if you're eligible – at the same time.
- Second, if you're a parent or guardian of someone aged 5 to 11, I ask that you think about getting your children vaccinated once it is approved as we hope it will be in the coming weeks.
- Like the flu shot, this is so important, because protecting children through vaccination provides a protection that extends well beyond them and will contribute greatly to ending the pandemic.

- Anticipating the approval of vaccination for children aged 5 to 11, Team Toronto is planning a "multi-prong" campaign with partners including:
 - Toronto Public Health
 - the City of Toronto
 - pharmacies
 - Toronto's hospitals
 - Ontario health teams
 - Family doctors, pediatricians and other clinics
 - Vaccination teams,
 - Specialists in children's health and
 - Representatives of the school community

- We are considering the best locations to deliver the vaccines across the City. They include mass immunization clinics, community-based clinics, and school-based clinics in addition to delivery through pharmacies and doctors' offices.

- To support the vaccination of the 5 to 11 year-old population, Toronto Public Health is launching a toolkit for parents, guardians and caregivers.

- The toolkit provides reliable information that addresses how to get children vaccinated, the question of risks, the certain benefits, vaccine safety, side effects, talking children about vaccination, and questions around reproductive health.

- Community town halls, telephone town halls and parent information sessions will be offered in the coming weeks. And, we will continue to add resources for parents and physicians in the coming days.

- What is most important to me today as we talk about what we are planning, is to say that most parents are naturally comfortable with the practical and established practice of vaccinating children against illness. It's something we've done all over the world for decades.

- However, in the world of social media in this pandemic, this usual practice sometimes becomes clouded. So, it is important that those with questions are able to get reliable answers to them, to fully understand the protection that comes with vaccination.
- The vaccination of children aged 5 to 11 *is* safe, protective and necessary.
- It is widely believed that children do not experience COVID-19 illness the same way adults do. Typically, this is true. But it is not guaranteed.
- Alberta Health recently released figures showing that since September first, ICU admissions of children sick with COVID-19 in Alberta have increased by 23 per cent and that hospitalizations of patients age 19 and under are up 24.5 per cent.
- This is the reality with COVID-19: if you give it the opportunity, if you are not protected, the virus *will* seize that opportunity to infect, whether you are young or older.
- There remains a chance you can be vaccinated and still contract COVID-19. If that happens, if you're vaccinated, it's *more* likely than not your illness *will* be mild and you will recover.
- So if you have a child who will become eligible for vaccination in the coming weeks, please get them vaccinated.
- You are protecting them, you are protecting your family and yourself, and especially you are protecting grandparents and elders who could become sick and be at risk as a result.