

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
October 6, 2021 at 11 a.m.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good morning everyone.
- Naturally, this latest vaccine outreach strategy has my full support.
- We knew that closing the gap on vaccinations would be a race where the final leg was won in small increments.
- Anyone who gets their first shot at one of these clinics will be able to complete their vaccinations in time for the December holidays. I think we can all agree that is one of the times of the year where gathering together means the most.
- To be able to gather in person with the confidence, with a superior level of protection against COVID is something you simply have to experience for yourself, as literally millions of Torontonians now know.
- So if you are eligible for vaccination and come across one of these clinics – or seek out a clinic opportunity at [Toronto.ca](https://toronto.ca) – do yourself a favour and get it done.
- There is another development that a lot of people are thinking about these days, which is the Province’s plan to provide for rapid antigen testing in locations where the risk of transmission is high.
- Local health units have been given the job of delivering the testing as directed by the Province. For some health units, this creates a capacity for testing that was – until this time – extremely limited.
- In Toronto, we’re fortunate that we have a robust and comprehensive testing delivery system for schools that is already up and running.
- Our current testing program is an essential component of TPH's contact and outbreak management system, which includes PCR take-home testing.

- The PCR tests that we are using have a high level of accuracy.
- At present, take-home PCR test kits are available to all schools across the city for symptomatic individuals and exposed cohorts.
- Toronto Public Health will take full advantage of the ability to enhance our existing program, which has been functioning successfully already for several weeks. And, we look forward to further details and then finalizing the integration of the rapid antigen testing capacity the Province announced with our school board partners.
- Finally, I've seen data recently that suggests that weddings are a distinct source of COVID-19 infections.
- Since September 24th, there have been five confirmed chains of transmission linked to weddings in the province.
- Now, we all know that weddings are a happy time. People are relaxed. People are gathered close. Emotions are high. And it feels safe.
- When we get together, it's easy to let our guards down.
- And it's a similar situation with the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Today is the last chance I will have to speak with you prior to that holiday.
- Whatever way you're planning to celebrate, please take into consideration the vaccination status of those participating and any others who may be attending who because of age or health may be more vulnerable to exposure or risk.
- Vaccines are the most powerful and effective means we have to be as tough on COVID as it has been on us.
- We still have to be consistent in how we mix and who we mix with – doing as much as we can without taking on more than we should.



Public Health

- We have a lot more to be thankful for this year than last, when we could only be hopeful for vaccines.
- Now we have access to them and they are making it much easier to plan wisely for this Thanksgiving holiday.

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