

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
November 24, 2021 at 1 p.m.
Metro Toronto Convention Center, 255
Front St W

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Yesterday, less than 24 hours ago, the first children in Canada aged 5 to 11 received their COVID-19 vaccines in this very clinic.
- What an amazing moment that was– and we are looking forward to many more amazing moments as we welcome the thousands of children who have an appointment booked at one Toronto Public Health's five immunization clinics over the next three weeks.
- Our Team Toronto vaccination partners are also ready to welcome thousands of families, with many opening their clinics today.
- At this time, choosing vaccination is *the* important decision, the important health decision that a parent can make to safeguard their children's health, the health of their family and the health of our communities.
- Since the provincial booking system went live yesterday morning, we have seen thousands of parents make that choice.
- And to them, I say thank you.
- Toronto Public Health has worked hard to create a welcoming and supportive environment for children and their families.
- All of our clinic staff are knowledgeable in how to keep children comfortable during vaccination, and use the "CARD" system – Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract – a proven method and strategies to make the vaccination experience a more positive one.
- Your children are in good hands.

- For parents who may still be on the fence about vaccinating their children against COVID-19, I would offer this.
- My colleague, Dr. Peter Juni, Scientific Director of Ontario's COVID-19 Science Advisory Table, said this week that the COVID-19 vaccines are the most studied vaccines in the history of the world.
- And indeed, closer to home, Health Canada's approval of these vaccines is premised on their safety and their effectiveness.
- And more than 3,000,000 children have been vaccinated in the United States so far, and while we are still from their experiences in getting information, thus far, there have been no major signals of concern.
- Over and above this, it is important to have your children vaccinated for multiple reasons.
- First – we need to protect children themselves – from infection and the risk of rare complications that can arise like multisystem inflammatory syndrome, hospitalization or a post-COVID condition.
- We also need to prevent transmission of COVID-19 within households, in our schools and especially to those at risk of developing serious illness.
- Earlier this week, the Canadian Pediatric Society – whose primary focus is on advancing the health of children and youth – released its statement on COVID-19 vaccine for children supporting childhood vaccination.
- While the Society acknowledges that children who become infected with COVID-19 generally present with mild illness or remain asymptomatic, they note that some children do suffer severe outcomes and hospitalization due to COVID-19 infection.
- The greatest effects of the pandemic, however, have been the disruption to children's education, physical and social activities, and to their mental health.

- And vaccination has a role to play here too. By limiting spread of COVID-19 through childhood vaccination, we will be able to support a safer return to the all of the activities that children have missed so much since the pandemic began. Activities that contribute to our children's health and to our own health too.
- If you continue to have questions about vaccination and your children, I encourage you to reach out to your family doctor or primary health care provider or pediatrician or take advantage of one of the physician consultation services offered by SickKids Hospital or Scarborough Health Network.
- Talking to knowledgeable people like these is key to ensuring that you understand the benefits and risks associated with COVID-19 infection and with vaccine so that you and your child can make an informed choice and feel secure in your decision on vaccination.
- And when you are ready to have your child vaccinated, if you choose to come to a Toronto Public Health clinic, know that we will look forward to meeting you and your child and providing you with the best possible care in a welcoming environment.