

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**November 10, 2021 at 1 p.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Today, you've heard about the details of our five to 11 year-old vaccination plan – a needs-based, data-driven, and equity-focused plan providing access to COVID-19 vaccinations to the more than 200,000 five to 11 year-olds living in Toronto.
- We hope for and anticipate approval and delivery of the vaccine for this age group later this month.
- When the vaccines are available, many parents and caregivers will want their children to be vaccinated as soon as possible, and we're prepared to meet that demand.
- We also expect that there may be some parents and caregivers who have some questions about having their children vaccinated against COVID-19.
- It is completely normal and expected to have questions about these vaccines. Some may wonder if vaccination against COVID-19 is even required for their children.
- It's true that in general, children have a much lower risk of severe outcomes and hospitalization compared to adults after contracting COVID-19, even when exposed to the Delta variant.
- However, children in Toronto – specifically four to 13 year-olds – currently have the highest reported case rate out of any other age group in the city – and they've had since late this summer.

- And while severe outcomes for children are rare – they do happen. All over the world, children have been hospitalized, treated in the ICU, and tragically some have died as a result of COVID-19 infection.
- Of those infected, a small number of children develop a life-threatening condition called multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. Others may have lingering symptoms for months after infection.
- And unvaccinated children, even if they do not become very ill themselves, can spread the virus to family members, friends and others they interact with regularly.
- In Toronto, we have seen how easily COVID-19 spreads within a household once one member becomes ill.
- Vaccinating the entire family against COVID-19 – including children – is an important step to protecting all members of the household including elders and those with chronic health conditions.
- Like many of you, I've been watching the rollout of five to 11 year-old vaccinations in the United States over the last several days.
- I noted that First Lady Jill Biden chose to attend an elementary school in Virginia to promote vaccine confidence and uptake – at the same elementary school where the first polio vaccines were administered.
- I think that was a fitting choice – not only because of the symbolic nature of the visit, but because vaccination so often relies on the partnership between public health and our colleagues in education.
- This has been true if we look at our collective efforts to battle childhood diseases in the past such as polio, smallpox and diphtheria.

- Education about vaccination is vital to ensure parents and caregivers have all the information they need to make informed decisions on behalf of their children.
- In order for a vaccine to be licensed for use in Canada, it must pass a rigorous process to demonstrate that they are safe and effective.
- As with all other aspects of the pandemic, the science is developing quickly. Only yesterday, a study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine on the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines for children.
- The available science confirms that vaccinating our children will protect them, their families and our community against the virus.
- If you're a parent of a five to 11 year old child and are unsure whether or not to vaccinate them against COVID-19, when you're able to do so, I encourage you to reach out to trusted, knowledgeable source of information like your pediatrician or your family physician.
- Please also take advantage of one of the many outreach and education opportunities that are being offered by Toronto Public Health and our Team Toronto partners.
- We will continue to help parents make informed decisions through information sessions, question and answer sessions, our Toronto Public Health hotline, hospital consultation services, and town halls.
- Until all children can be vaccinated, I urge all those who are eligible but have yet to do so, to receive their COVID-19 vaccine.
- I also ask you to continue to be vigilant.

- While it's true that in Toronto, the number of reported cases continues to be relatively low, we are monitoring a slight increase in COVID-19 activity as demonstrated through our seven-day moving average for new COVID-19 cases and our weekly incidence rate.
- We are also seeing many jurisdictions around the province experience a rapid increase in COVID-19 activity.
- So I ask that you please continue to assess your personal risk, how you're interacting with others and continue to employ the measures like masking, physical distancing as much as possible, and taking advantage of this unseasonably warm November weather and taking activities outside.
- You will be protecting your families, your friends, and individuals at greatest risk of severe illness and those who are not yet eligible for vaccination.
- Through these measures and of course through vaccination, you will be doing your part to help bring this pandemic to an end.

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