

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
January 6, 2022 at 11:00 a.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good morning.
- Over the past week, the team at Toronto Public Health, has received a number of inquiries from both media and members of the public on the Omicron variant and the effectiveness of vaccine against it.
- On Tuesday, I spoke of the highly transmissible nature of the Omicron variant.
- I noted that many of us are experiencing how contagious this variant is first hand – with friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances contracting COVID-19 at an unprecedented rate.
- And given the degree of spread in the community, especially with nearly 90 per cent of those 12 years of age and older with two doses of vaccine, we have received a number of questions as of late about vaccine effectiveness.
- We've read your social media posts and taken your phone calls asking about how could it be that after doing everything right --- getting fully vaccinated with two doses, getting a booster dose, limiting in-person contacts, wearing a mask, and practicing all of the public health measures --- how could it be that you or someone you love has COVID-19?
- We are seeing both first-hand and in the emerging science, that COVID-19 and the Omicron variant in particular is very, very difficult to stop. This virus will take every opportunity it has to replicate.
- According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, based on Ontario data, each Omicron case infects about 4.5 times more people than each Delta case.

- So we must continue to do everything we can to limit Omicron's spread including vaccination and all of the self-protection measures that have served us well over the course of the pandemic. We know this makes a difference – and we're seeing this in recent scientific studies.
- As of December 30 2021 in Canada, the majority of confirmed Omicron cases – about 60 per cent were in unvaccinated people.
- And studies to date are showing good vaccine effectiveness – in the range of 70 to 78 per cent – against hospitalization due to Omicron infection after receiving a third dose of vaccine
- So as the Mayor just said, getting a first, second and third dose of vaccine when you're eligible is essential, and I encourage you to get the vaccines you're eligible for as soon as possible. It can help to decrease your risk of infection and, should you get COVID-19, it reduces the severity of disease.
- I want you to think about driving for a moment. If you drive, there are many steps that you take to reduce the likelihood that you will find yourself in a motor vehicle accident.
- Things like watching your speed. Driving for the weather conditions. Keeping your vehicle in good working order. Turning on your lights to make sure you're visible.
- Alone, any of these measures will help. Used together, they significantly reduce the risk that you will experience a car accident.
- For months, I have been encouraging all of us to follow what we call "measures of self-protection". These measures are like the road safety measures I just described.

- With Omicron and its ability to spread from person to person, the measures I'm asking you to take include reducing your in-person contacts as much as possible. Wearing a well-fitting, high-quality mask --- the best quality you can get. Washing your hands. Staying home when you're sick. Completing your daily screening before you leave your household and staying home when you're ill.
- Remember, doing one of these things alone will help to reduce your risk. Doing all of them together, and the likelihood that you will contract Omicron is significantly reduced.
- Getting fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is like wearing your seat belt.
- You could do everything right and still be in a car accident through no fault of your own. But, wearing your seat belt could save your life.
- In a similar fashion, that's the power of COVID-19 vaccination – especially a third booster dose. It's like your seat belt. It could make your illness less severe. It could save your life if you contract COVID-19.
- So I'm asking you to recommit to doing all that you can to keep yourself, your household and your community safe.
- Toronto Public Health will continue to do everything in our power to ensure that vaccine is available and as accessible as possible.
- And as the Mayor said, together, we will get through this.