



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Acting Medical Officer of Health

May 19, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Overall Trends

- Sadly, we continue to see COVID-19 deaths in our community. To date, 111 people have died in our community.
- I wish to express my deepest condolences to all the families, friends, and caregivers who have lost loved ones to COVID-19.
- Among our 111 deaths, 20 are from the community and 91 are associated with outbreaks.
- Currently there are 13 long-term care or retirement homes in outbreak.
- Twenty-one long-term care or retirement homes have had their outbreak declared over
- 673 persons are now classified as resolved.

Reinforcing measures and re-opening

- I was somewhat disappointed to hear of examples of residents not following physical distancing measures over the long weekend.
- Yes, it was a long weekend – the unofficial beginning of summer – yes, we had some nicer weather at the beginning of the weekend.
- But we can't undo all the good work that has gone into slowing the spread of COVID-19 in Waterloo Region
- I realize that we've been asking residents to stay home for some time now, and I fully understand that, as restrictions are lifted, people are eager to be outside and begin doing some of the things they haven't been able to do for weeks.
- But we cannot go back to 'normal'. We have to go to the 'new normal'.
- And physical distancing is at the foundation of this 'new normal'.
- This point becomes more important than ever, as more places begin to re-open this week.
- Due to the fact that we are seeing more and more people together, and not always physical distancing, I recommend that, in places where there are other

people, residents wear non-medical masks such as cloth masks and face coverings if they can.

- So I repeat that it is critical that residents continue to practice public health measures to strongly guard against a rapid resurgence of COVID-19 cases again.
- Please remember that testing, which is now open to anyone in our community with symptoms of COVID-19, is a tool used to help us identify cases in our community – it does not prevent transmission from occurring in the first place.
- The tools of primary prevention (i.e. preventing infection in the first place) are our best defence against COVID-19

Data Quality (IC/ES Report)

- Last week a report on testing across Ontario categorized Waterloo Region as having a low rate of testing.
- The report indicated that as of April 30, Waterloo Region had tested 5,198 people, a rate of 871 per 100,000.
- On that same date (April 30), our records indicate that 7,790 tests were completed in Waterloo Region at a rate of 1,288 per 100,000.
- So not an insignificant difference.
- We understand the IC/ES study used a lab database called OLIS to arrive at their numbers.
- Not all labs are reporting into OLIS or did not start until later on.
- We understand some labs, which may not be submitting into OLIS or may have started submitting later on, have processed a significant amount of our samples.
- We are in the process of trying to understand from those who oversee the lab system which labs reported into OLIS and when, and how many specimens submitted from our region ended up in OLIS.
- We cannot say for sure which labs our specimens were analyzed at either, because of the re-routing that can occur. So we are also trying to find answers to that.
- We also understand some of the testing that was done earlier at long-term care/retirement homes in the region were not included in OLIS counts.
- So we're still looking into it with PHO Lab and IC/ES.
- The important thing is we've opened up testing to all persons who have symptoms of COVID-19 in our region, and we encourage all those who are eligible for testing to be tested.

Testing reminder

- I want to remind everyone that all residents with symptoms of COVID-19 are now eligible for testing.
- There are four assessment and testing locations in Waterloo Region.
 - Last week I mentioned there are 5 because the two Cambridge clinics are at the same location (Cambridge Memorial Hospital).

- For simplicity, going forward, we are now referring to them together as the Cambridge North Dumfries community assessment centre located at Cambridge Memorial Hospital
- Residents experiencing symptoms are encouraged to use the self-assessment tool to determine if they need to seek further care or testing
 - The tool can be found at **covid19checkup [DOT] ca**
- The tool can also connect individuals experiencing symptoms with a primary care provider for a virtual assessment who can then make a referral to one of the assessment and testing centres.
- Individuals are also now able to make self-referrals to three of the four sites – those located at our local hospitals.

Closing Remarks

- Please continue to limit the amount of times you do go out.
- When you do go out, please practice the following measures:
 - **Continue to only spend time with your household contacts**
 - **Do not gather in groups of more than 5**
 - **Keep 2 metres between yourself and others when you do go out**
 - **In places where there are other people, wear non-medical masks such as cloth masks and face coverings if you can**
 - **And continue to wash your hands often**
- Thank you