



COVID-19 Update

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

April 8, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Status in Waterloo Region

- As we are still in the early phases of this pandemic, we have and will continue to see for some time, daily increases in the number of cases.
- And sadly, we continue to see more fatalities as a result of COVID-19.
- I would like to express my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those who recently passed, as well as to the health care workers whose care they were under.
- ...
- I would like to point out a couple of things about our dashboard:
 - Numbers current as of 7 p.m. the evening before:
 - Due to the volume of cases, our dashboard numbers are current as of 7 p.m. the evening before.
 - This does not mean the work stops at 7 p.m. Our hospitals, our long-term care and retirement homes, our Public Health staff, our health system as a whole... continues to work around the clock
 - We are continuing to work, managing cases and outbreaks
 - Anything that comes in after 7 p.m. the evening before will show up on the next day's dashboard refresh.
 - The dashboard is not a real-time tool for reporting on numbers; it is meant to keep the community informed on the trends we are seeing.
 - Regarding our 'date of onset' epi-curves:
 - Like all epi-curves of this type, there is typically a 1-2 week lag between symptom onset in new cases, and when cases are reported and added to them.
 - Therefore, the epi-curves are dynamic, and the data for the last 1-2 weeks will continue to be updated daily.

- We have now bolded the footnote providing that explanation, so people can see it more easily.

Long term care

- We are continuing to see more cases in long-term care and retirement homes, and more homes have at least one case.
- This is what we expected, and it continues to highlight that this is a more vulnerable population to COVID-19.
- It also highlights the importance of continuing the strict measures that have been put in place for these homes.
- As well as the importance of all of us in the community doing everything we can to reduce community transmission of COVID-19, which will also reduce the risk to our most vulnerable populations.

The work we are doing with LTCH:

- Detailed guidance has been provided for long-term care homes from the Ministry of Health
- Public Health is working closely with homes under outbreak to support them in implementing this guidance.
- We stay in close contact with the homes, and check in with them at least daily, for the duration of the outbreak.
- Examples of actions implemented to prevent COVID-19 from coming in to the facility include the screening of staff and visitors, limiting visitors and isolating new admissions
- Examples of actions implemented to limit transmission of COVID in the home once a case has been identified include testing, isolation, use of PPE, stopping new admissions, having staff work at that facility only, stopping communal activities, increased cleaning.

Additional info:

- Public Health has produced a resource package for long term care homes which is shared in outbreak situations so the long term care home understands how we will work with them during the outbreak.
- An information sheet has been developed for both staff and residents and family to be distributed at the beginning of the outbreak so that they have reliable information.
- Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes will continue to be the primary sources of communication to their residents, staff and family members of residents.

Easter

- As we approach Easter weekend, it's timely to remind us all of the need to stay at home, and to continue using physical distancing.
- We know these are the most effective means to slow the spread of COVID.
- Easter is a time when many of us come together with our wider family, but can't this year. Each of us will continue to have a personal role & responsibility to do everything we can to slow the spread of this pandemic.
- So I'm asking all of our residents who celebrate Easter... please only celebrate with members of your own household and check-in virtually with other members of your family.
- It will be especially important that we do not 'relax' our physical distancing measures during the Easter weekend.
- Any 'relaxing' of our measures will subsequently lead to more cases than we otherwise would have had, and a more rapid escalation of severe cases and deaths.

Conclusion

- I know the social measures that we have put in place are difficult and will only become more difficult in the coming weeks.
- Without those measures, we would have experienced an exponential, uncontrolled rise in cases, and our health care system would have been overwhelmed.
- The measures have prevented many more severe outcomes and deaths that we would have otherwise had.
- I sincerely thank everyone who is doing all they can to help our community.
- While we need to continue these efforts for some time, your efforts have made an impact... and everything we continue to do will determine our future.