



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

# COVID-19 Update

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December 3, 2021

## Highlights

- COVID-19 continues to circulate widely in our community. We cannot let our guards down.
- Cases are continuing to occur much more frequently among those who are unvaccinated and are rising among those who have been, until very recently, ineligible for vaccination (our 5–11-year-olds).
- Even if you are fully vaccinated, you should practice public health precautions, now and right through the holiday season.
- Efforts are underway to slow entry of the Omicron variant into Canada, and to slow the spread in communities when cases occur.
- A small number of cases have been identified so far in Ontario. Although no local cases have been identified yet, I would not be surprised to hear of identified cases in Waterloo Region.
- Even when cases are identified here, it is important to remember that we would not go back to ground zero. We know what we can do to effectively slow the spread.
- The more we build our community immunity and practice public health precautions, the greater our defenses against Delta and Omicron.

## Overall trends

- In November, we saw a steady increase in our number of daily cases, especially among those who are unvaccinated.
- COVID-19 continues to circulate widely in our community. Our wastewater data has also been showing widespread presence of the virus. We cannot let our guards down.
- As of yesterday, our 7-day average case rate was 34 cases per 100,000/week. Ontario's was 38 cases per 100,000/week.

Document Number: 3889488

- Cases are continuing to occur much more frequently among those who are unvaccinated and are rising among those who have been, until very recently, ineligible for vaccination (our 5–11-year-olds).
- Concurrent with the increase in cases among school-aged children, we are seeing an increased number of outbreaks declared in elementary school cohorts.
- This trend will likely continue until more of our 5–11-year-old population become immunized.
- Immunization has prevented significant spread in the older, 12-17 school cohorts.
- Most other outbreaks also remain limited in scope.
- The impact on our health care system in regards to COVID-19 remains moderate at this time, but the pressures on the hospitals remain high in combination with other non-COVID-19 demands.
- With the widespread circulation of Delta and the need to remain vigilant in the face of the new Omicron variant, our best defense is to get immunized and practice public health precautions.

## **New variant: Omicron**

- Since the start of the pandemic, we've seen a number of variants of concern emerge (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and now Omicron).
- New variants are being detected at faster rates due to enhanced surveillance and detection capabilities in Canada and around the world.
- Efforts are underway to slow entry of the Omicron variant into Canada, and to slow the spread in our communities when cases are identified.
- A small number of cases have been identified so far in Ontario.
- Although no local cases have been identified yet, I would not be surprised to hear of cases identified in Waterloo Region at any time.
- Even when cases are identified here, it is important to remember that we would not go back to ground zero.
- We know what we can do to effectively slow the spread.
  - Getting fully vaccinated; and
  - Continuing to practice public health precautions
- The more we build our community immunity and practice public health precautions, the greater our defenses against Delta and Omicron.
- We must not let our guards down, especially over the holiday season. We must continue to:
  - Wear a well-fitting, well-constructed mask
  - Maintain physical distance with others
  - Minimize the size of any in-person gatherings we organize and avoid attending large gatherings
  - Limiting our time in crowded environments, especially indoors
  - Making sure we spend time only in well-ventilated spaces

## Closing remarks

- I would like to thank thousands of parents and guardians for getting their 5-11 year olds vaccinated this past week.
- I really appreciate all the kids who got vaccinated too. You're awesome.
- If you're eligible for a third dose, our regional vaccination clinics are prioritizing children's doses until December 12, but you can get a third dose now at many local pharmacies and family doctor's offices.
- In the face of Delta and Omicron, we can mount the strongest defense possible by getting fully vaccinated and continuing to practice public health precautions.
- I know it can be disheartening when we think of a potential new threat. And having to keep up with our vigilance is tiring.
- We must remember though that all the progress we've made together as a community counts: In the face of new threats, it is better to have a higher wall of defense than a lower one.
- Let's keep building our wall of defense to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our community. Thank you.