COVID-19 Update

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Highlights

- Our indicators continue to move in the right direction.
- It is very encouraging that we are past the peak of the Omicron wave.
- Resuming our activities cautiously and gradually will help our health care system and all those who are still waiting for their surgeries and procedures, and help us exit this wave faster.
- Vaccination remains our best defence for current and future variants.
- Better days are ahead due to so many in our community stepping up, not only to protect themselves and their loved ones, but also to protect others and help our community get through this.

Overall trends

- Local indicators are showing that the Omicron wave continues to decline in Waterloo Region:
  1. Wastewater signals:
     - After a temporary plateau, the wastewater data up to February 12 indicates that the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) wastewater signal continued to decline at all sites
     - The wastewater signal remains high relative to previous waves and continues to be dominated by the Omicron variant. BA.1 is the primary sub-lineage detected but there has also been moderate presence of the BA.2 sub-lineage in Waterloo Region wastewater
  2. Per cent positivity:
     - The 7-day moving average of per cent positivity continues to slowly decline and is now at 9.4%
3. **Outbreaks and hospital capacity:**
   - The number of outbreaks in high-risk settings has declined. There were 24 active outbreaks as of yesterday, including 10 in long-term care and retirement homes, 6 in congregate settings, and 8 hospital outbreaks.
   - New hospitalizations are also continuing to decline.
   - Hospitals continue to be under pressure, due to large numbers still in hospital recovering from COVID but no longer part of the numbers because they are no longer infectious. The hospitals are providing weekly updates.

**Easing of restrictions**

- Omicron is continuing to circulate but we are coming down from the peak of the wave and restrictions are easing.
- Everyone will have a different comfort level with the removal of restrictions.
  - I ask us all to be respectful and considerate of the comfort levels of others at this time.
- I continue to recommend that people resume their activities in a gradual manner.
- I am also continuing to recommend that residents:
  - Get vaccinated including your booster dose, even if you’ve already been infected
  - Getting a booster even if you’ve been infected is expected to provide longer-lasting protection against future variants
  - Waiting until it’s been three months after your infection is likely optimal, although there are no safety issues if you’ve gotten it earlier
  - Stay home if you’re sick
  - Wear your mask
  - Optimize your ventilation, and avoid crowded places and enclosed spaces

**Closing remarks**

- Vaccination remains our best defence for current and future variants.
- A booster dose is now available for everyone 12 years of age and older.
- Thank you again to everyone who continues to do their part. It is because of you that we have avoided much worse impacts and can look ahead to brighter days.
- Thank you.