



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health
Public Health and Emergency Services
January 22, 2021

Highlights

- We are starting to see new cases slow and move in the right direction but numbers are still quite high.
- It is critical that we continue to limit our close contacts because COVID-19 can be spread to close contacts unknowingly before symptoms develop.
- Our continued improvement depends on the actions of everyone in our community.

Overall trends....

- We are starting to see new cases slow and move in the right direction, but our situation remains serious and the second wave has impacted our community significantly.
- Our incidence rate has decreased:
 - It is now at approximately 127 cases per 100,000 per week.
- We are currently managing 857 active cases and 38 outbreaks.
 - While these numbers are down from our record highs last week, they are still much higher than what we have previously experienced in the spring or early fall.
- Taking into account interim data, our latest per cent positivity has also begun to decrease and is currently at 5.5 per cent
- Our latest reproductive rate is at 0.8
- Hospitalizations and ICU admissions in our community are up.
 - This is not unexpected, hospitalizations, people requiring ICU care and sadly, deaths, are lagging indicators.
 - They are expected they will continue to increase in the weeks following high case rates.

Enhanced measures

- We are beginning to see the impact our individual actions and enhanced provincial measures are having, to bring the spread of COVID-19 under control.
- I want to be clear that while we are seeing improvement, our numbers are still quite high.
- COVID-19 continues to circulate widely in our community and we must continue our commitment to public health measures to keep moving in the right direction.
- Ontario's enhanced public health are anticipated to be in place until at least **February 11, 2021** with the possibility of extension as needed.
- Evaluation of the measures will be done at the provincial level, as will the decision to lift or extend any measures.
- We remain supportive of Ontario's enhanced measures and the need for people to reduce activities, staying home as much as possible and only leaving for essential purposes such as for work, food, medical appointments, or physical activity.
- Due to questions we've had on this topic, I'd like to mention that drive-in religious services, rites or ceremonies are permitted in Ontario under current regulations as long as:
 - People in attendance remain inside their vehicle except where necessary to use a washroom or as may be necessary for health and safety; and
 - Vehicles are at least 2 metres apart
 - In-person outdoor gathering limits do not apply to drive-in religious services.

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- Limiting our close contacts is one of the most important actions we can each take, to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- One of the challenges with COVID-19 is that the infectious period, when you can spread it to others, can begin before you develop symptoms.
- This means you can unknowingly spread it to someone you have close contact with – often to the people you care about the most.
- When we reduce your close contacts and limit our essential trips, we reduce the opportunity for COVID-19 to spread.
- By taking these actions, we work to protect each other.

Dashboard update

- Earlier this week we made some updates to the outbreak tab on our dashboard to provide a clearer summary of active outbreaks in our community by setting.
- All outbreaks are now reported in one table, organized by setting. You can filter by setting or you can also filter outbreaks by
 - Active outbreaks only
 - Active outbreaks and declared over in the last seven days
 - All outbreaks active and over
- There are also two new graphs.

- These changes allow dashboard users to have a greater understanding of how outbreaks are distributed across our community.
- Outbreaks are a reflection of what we see in the community. As community spread increases, we expect to see more cases and more outbreaks being declared.

Closing remarks

- We are starting to see some of our trends improve, but there is much still to be done.
- We are not on the other side of the second wave yet.
- Our continued improvement depends on the actions of everyone in our community.
- The measures are not easy and I appreciate that this is a period of significant strain and challenge for many.
- But Waterloo Region is a caring and resilient community and I encourage us to support each other.
- Stay connected while apart.
- I also encourage us to look for opportunities to support our mental health by staying active.
- Many of our municipal partners are offering recreational programming that can be done at home or safely outside.
- And if you are struggling, local support is available for you.
- I am grateful for your continued efforts and we are starting to see how our everyday actions can make a difference.
- By working together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.
- Thank you.