



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

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Public Health and Emergency Services
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Highlights

- Our indicators are still high (in the Red Zone), but relatively stable.
- We continue to be in a risky period.
- Most health unit areas have started to experience an increase to their rates.
- So we must continue to exercise the utmost caution.
- Recent changes – the end of the stay-at-home order, enhanced case and contact management for cases (assuming any case could be a variant), and stricter school screening guidance has led to an increase in the “unseen” work that Public Health staff are regularly engaged in to slow the spread of COVID-19.
 - These changes and our residents’ commitment to public health measures work together to slow the spread of COVID-19

Overall trends

- Our indicators are still high, but they are relatively stable.
- In the last 3-4 weeks, they have oscillated between 45-60 cases per 100,000 population per week.
 - Currently, the rate is at the lower end of that range, at approximately 46 cases per 100,000 population per week.
- We are currently managing 324 active cases and 21 active outbreaks.
 - Our number of outbreaks have started trending downwards.
- Taking into account interim data, our latest per cent positivity is currently at 2.1 per cent.
- Our latest reproductive rate is currently at 0.9, which is under 1.
- We continue to monitor the indicators closely, but at this time we remain in the Red-Control zone of the Province’s Framework.
- Our community is not immune to the possibility of rapidly accelerating case rates, as other communities are seeing in Ontario.
- In fact, provincially, case rates are starting to rise again.

- 24 out of 34 Public Health Unit areas have seen an increase in case rates over the past two weeks; and, of these, 14 Public Health Unit areas have seen growth of more than 30 per cent

Variants of concern

- To date, a total of 179 variant cases have been identified in Waterloo Region.
- Of that total, 15 cases have been confirmed for the B.1.1.7 variant.
- And the remaining 164 cases have screened positive for, and are awaiting confirmation of, a specific variant of concern.
- In Ontario, over 1000 cases have been confirmed as a variant, and over 6,500 have screened positive for a variant.
- We expect to see a continual increase in the number of cases that screen positive for a variant. At this time, our percentage of cases that screen positive isn't growing as quickly as it is in Ontario overall.
- Public health measures are very effective against variants of concern, which is why it's critical that we continue to keep up with measures such as limiting close contacts, maintaining physical distance, and wearing face coverings.
- These measures protect against the spread of COVID-19, including its variants.

“Unseen” (behind the scenes) work

- Recent changes – the end of the stay-at-home order, enhanced case and contact management for cases (assuming any case could be a variant), and stricter school screening guidance has led to an increase in the “unseen” work that Public Health staff are regularly engaged in to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- For the period of February 22 to March 7, Public Health has:
 - Managed 2,739 contacts
 - Monitored 117 workplaces (up from 74 in the preceding two week period)
 - Monitored 89 school/ child care groups/cohorts (up from 48 in the preceding two week period)
 - Investigated 75 long-term care home, retirement home and congregate care settings (up from 63 in the preceding two week period)
- Case, contact and outbreak management continue to be fundamentally important to controlling spread, and are much more effective when people are limiting their non-essential social interactions and trips outside the home.

Closing remarks

- We continue to be in a risky period.
- While our indicators are relatively stable, the variants are increasing provincially and locally, and most health unit areas have started to experience an increase to their rates.

- While vaccine supply has improved and vaccination clinics are ramping up in Waterloo Region, there will not be enough supply coming in the next few weeks to be the solution to avert a third wave.
- We need to keep up with our strict public health practices for at least the next few months.
- We still need to exercise utmost caution, but the light at the end of the tunnel grows brighter every day.
- I want to thank our community for all of your efforts.
- The measures aren't easy but they are effective and your actions have and are continuing to make a difference.
- Keeping up with public health measures protects your loved ones, your coworkers, your neighbours.
- Let's keep going.
- Thank you.