



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
May 14, 2021

Highlights

- Overall, our indicators are slowing moving in the right direction but we have seen some stagnation with our overall case rates.
- The decision to pause the use of AstraZeneca was done out of an abundance of caution due to an increase in the reporting rate of vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT).
- I am supportive of the extension of the stay-at-home order at this time.

Overall trends

- Overall, our indicators are slowing moving in the right direction but we have seen some stagnation with our overall case rates.
- As of May 12, our weekly incidence rate is 75 cases per 100,000 per week.
 - Over the last week, we have seen some fluctuations in our daily case counts, which is not unexpected.
 - Ontario's weekly incidence rate continues to improve and the provincial average is now down to approximately 115 cases per 100,000 per week.
- We are currently managing 473 active cases and 16 active outbreaks.
- Taking into account interim data, our 7-day average for per cent positivity continues to drop and is now at 4.6 per cent. Ontario's 7-day average is at 7.4 per cent.
- We continue to have a high number of COVID-19 cases in our local hospitals, both acute cases and those who are no longer infectious but remain in serious condition, requiring ongoing hospitalization or ICU care.
- Our situation remains precarious. It's imperative that we keep up with public health measures and continue to follow the requirements of the stay-at-home order to further drive our rates down.

AstraZeneca

- The decision to pause the use of AstraZeneca was done out of an abundance of caution due to an increase in the reporting rate of vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT).
- Further administration of the vaccine is being paused while data about VITT are reviewed and this action demonstrates that Ontario's vaccine safety surveillance system is working.
- I understand this news may cause some stress and anxiety. It is important to know that the risk of VITT for anyone who received the AstraZeneca vaccine is still rare.
- Individuals who received a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine received protection earlier and significantly reduced their risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19 infection and helped protect their loved ones.
- No matter which COVID-19 vaccine an individual received, **they did the right thing by getting immunized as soon as possible**. They also contributed to our progress in protecting our community and driving our case rates lower.
- The Ministry of Health will provide direction regarding whether these persons should receive AstraZeneca or a different vaccine for their second dose.
- Preliminary data from the United Kingdom suggests that the risk of VITT is likely much lower after the second dose than after the first dose.
- As soon as we have direction from the Province, we will share the recommended course of action so people who received a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine are aware of their options.

Stay-at-home order

- Yesterday we heard from the Premier that the stay-at-home order and all health and workplace safety measures will remain in effect until at least June 2.
- I am supportive of the extension.
- I recognize that it has been a very difficult year for many and many were hoping for loosened restrictions.
- Though we are seeing improvements to our indicators, both in Waterloo Region and across Ontario, those gains can quickly be reversed if we move too fast to reopen.
- A cautious approach to reopening gives us the best chance to avoid another shutdown.
- Stay home, reduce your mobility, and limit your close contacts.
- A brighter future is ahead of us, let's keep doing our part, and we will get there - together.

Closing remarks

- As Chair Redman said earlier, this week is National Nursing Week.
- It is a time to reflect on and celebrate the great work nurses have done this past year... and every year.

- Nurses support our residents and our communities in so many ways... they are the bedrock of our health system, provide us the best care when we're ill, or keep us healthy and safe with everything that they do.
- Thank you for all that you do, every day.