



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

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Public Health and Emergency Services
November 12, 2021

Highlights

- The spread of Delta has increased again in our community. We need to assume that we could come into contact with COVID-19 at any time.
- Rapid antigen tests will be offered to schools in situations when they may be of added value, that is, in high-risk situations. In order to help prevent whole school closure or as an additional screening tool upon reopening after a closure.
- Please remember the “Swiss cheese” model of protection. While vaccination is our strongest layer, we need to continue to employ multiple layers of protection, which means continuing to practice public health precautions.

Overall trends

- We continue to monitor our local situation closely as our case rates have recently doubled.
- Our weekly case rate is currently 31 cases per 100,000 and we are managing 207 active cases and 12 active outbreaks.
- As normally follows a rise in cases, we are starting to see more outbreaks in various settings. Vaccination policies in workplaces can significantly reduce the extent of outbreaks should they occur.
- As many cases continue to be among the unvaccinated, we are likely to see some increase in hospitalizations and ICU admissions in the coming weeks. We will be closely monitoring the impacts on our health care system.
- On Wednesday, Ontario announced a pause on lifting capacity limits for higher-risk settings due to increasing cases across the Province. The large majority of health units are now seeing an increase in case rates.
- I have been supportive of a cautious and gradual approach to reopening that is informed by data, and support Ontario’s decision to pause the lifting of further restrictions at this time.

Rapid antigen screening for schools

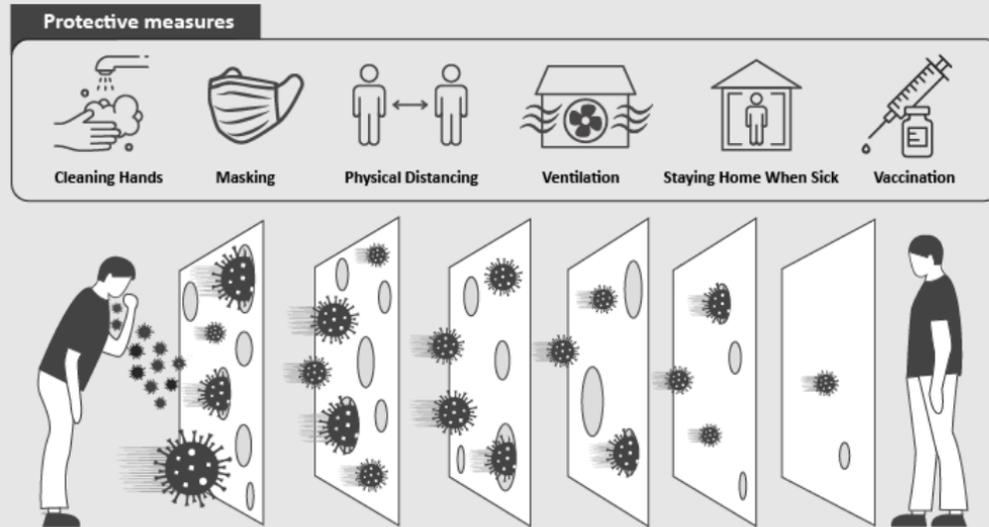
- Rapid antigen tests will be offered to schools in situations when they may be of added value, that is, in high-risk situations.
- They will be offered in two types of situations:
 - Situation 1: When Public Health is concerned about the level of spread in a particular school, in an effort to prevent what would otherwise be a whole school closure. This is also known as the ‘test to stay’ strategy.
 - Such as when we are seeing cases or outbreaks in multiple cohorts or classes that are not linked.
 - In such situations, rapid antigen screening will be offered to **asymptomatic** and **unvaccinated** children who are **not high-risk contacts**, to help identify cases in **other cohorts** in the school that have **not yet had a case**.
 - 60% participation of unvaccinated students in these other cohorts (in some cases the whole school) will be required
 - Situation 2: As an additional screening tool upon school reopening after a whole school closure
 - Again, the tests will be offered to **asymptomatic** and **unvaccinated** children who are **not high-risk contacts** for a period of time after a school reopens.
- In both situations, the rapid antigen screening will be voluntary.
- When rapid antigen screening will be offered, Region of Waterloo Public Health will:
 - Notify school administrators that their school has met the criteria outlined above.
 - Provide the school with an information letter to distribute to parents
 - Send the school the rapid antigen screening kits and accompanying information and instruction letter for families.
- The schools will then:
 - Send an email to families letting them know their school has met the criteria to be offered voluntary rapid antigen screening
 - Distribute rapid antigen screening kits and provided resources to families.

Public health precautions

- The spread of Delta has increased again in our community. We need to assume that we could come into contact with COVID-19 at any time.
- Please remember the Swiss cheese model of protection. While vaccination is our strongest layer, we need to continue to employ multiple layers of protection, which means continuing to practice public health precautions.
- From [Public Health Ontario](#):

Layers of protection against COVID-19

Use **multiple layers** of prevention to provide the best protection, especially if you cannot avoid closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact. No single intervention on its own is perfect at preventing COVID-19 spread.



Adapted from: Rockefeller Foundation. Layers of protection against covid-19 - the "Swiss cheese" model [video recording on the Internet]. New York: Rockefeller Foundation; 2021 [cited 2021 Jun 02]. 1:15 min. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou88lei-52k>

- In addition to becoming fully vaccinated, all residents are advised to continue to:
 - Practice physical distancing between yourself and all others that you don't live with
 - Wear a mask or face covering in all indoor public spaces and outdoor settings where required or where physical distance cannot be maintained
 - Limit your close contacts where possible – the people with whom you spend time without masks or distance
 - Ensure indoor environments are well-ventilated
 - If you have any symptoms, self-isolate from others in your household as much as you can and seek testing at a local assessment and testing centre.
 - Our Isolation Site is also available for anyone who cannot safely isolate in their own home.
- We also continue to encourage that all residents who are eligible get vaccinated and get their booster dose, once they are eligible.

Closing remarks

- Our situation is delicate and it can change quickly if we let our guards down.
- Continuing to push vaccination rates as high as possible for those who are eligible and continuing to practice public health measures is essential.
- Like multiple layers of Swiss cheese, vaccination and public health measures work together to prevent infections, and limit and control the spread of COVID-19.

- We all have a role to play and our actions matter.
- Thank you for protecting yourself, your loved ones, and your community.