COVID-19 Update

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Highlights

• We are seeing a small but steady increase in the number of cases, especially among those who are unvaccinated.
• As expected, following an increase in case rates, we have also seen an increase in the number of outbreaks in workplaces and schools.
• Today, we are beginning to administer pediatric doses of the Pfizer vaccine to 5-11 year olds. The vaccine will help protect children from COVID-19. It will also help keep them in school and doing the activities they enjoy.
• If you are fully vaccinated, you still need to practice public health precautions, and not let down your guard as we head into the holiday season.

Overall trends

• In November, we are continuing to see a small but steady increase in our number of daily cases, especially among those who are unvaccinated.
• Our case rates are slightly higher than the provincial average of 30 new cases per 100,000 per week.
• In Waterloo Region, as of yesterday’s update, our rate is 36 new cases per 100,000 per week.
• Our wastewater monitoring data is continuing to show widespread presence of the virus in our region.
• As expected, following an increase in case rates, we are seeing an increase in the number of outbreaks in workplaces and schools.
• Most outbreaks remain limited in scope.
• The impacts on our health care system remain moderate at this time.
• Immunization and public health measures help limit spread when cases and outbreaks occur, as they inevitably will, with widespread circulation of the virus.
Delta is highly transmissible. In particular, during the colder months when we are indoors, it will spread incredibly easily.

- When individual cases and outbreaks are detected, and then controlled, we should not see this as a failure on the part of individuals, many of whom are doing what they can to prevent transmitting COVID-19. We should see it as a success of our system in detecting and managing COVID-19, of the public health measures we are employing to protect one another, and of our increasing levels of community immunity through residents stepping up to get vaccinated.
- All these actions are effectively pushing back against Delta, and will help us successfully overcome this pandemic in the longer-term.

Updates to our Prevented Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths on the Dashboard

- The Vaccine Impacts tab on the COVID-19 case dashboard is scheduled to be updated at 1:30 pm today.
- As a result of factors such as updates to our population denominator including a larger number of people now assigned to the older age groups (who have higher levels of vaccination coverage and are more vulnerable to serious outcomes), and the higher levels of transmission we are currently seeing, the dashboard will show a notable increase to our estimated numbers of prevented hospitalizations and deaths. (Estimates derived using the methodology employed by Public Health Ontario.)
- Since the start of the vaccine program in Waterloo Region, COVID-19 vaccines have prevented close to 8,900 cases, over 2,200 hospitalizations, and over 450 deaths, to date.

Holiday season

- As we approach the holiday season, please remember:
- Gatherings or events outdoors are safer than indoors.
- The fewer people who gather, the lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Keep your gatherings as small as possible.
  - Please remember that, legally, indoor gatherings must be limited to a maximum of 25 people and outdoor gatherings to a maximum of 100 people.
- If you gather with other households with members who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or of unknown vaccination status, you should wear a face covering and physically distance. Especially if you are indoors.
Indoors, you should also make sure your space is well ventilated. Outdoors, you should at least wear a face covering if you cannot distance from others.

• Travel advice:
  o If you are planning to travel this upcoming holiday season, it’s strongly recommended that you be fully vaccinated.
  o If you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated, you should avoid non-essential travel.
  o Regardless of vaccination status, if you choose to travel, please continue to practice the recommended public health precautions.
  o Travellers should stay informed about the COVID-19 situation at their destination, and follow all local COVID-19 restrictions.
  o If any traveller is symptomatic upon return, even with mild symptoms, please get tested and stay home until you receive the negative test result.
  o And if you plan on travelling internationally, remember you need to follow all the federal requirements for international travel.

Closing remarks

• I would like to thank again the residents of our community for getting vaccinated in such large numbers, including those who are coming forward now.
• I would also like to thank parents and guardians who are booking appointments for their 5-11 year olds to receive their first dose before the holidays.
• For those who have not yet gotten a first dose, it’s not too late. Even if you’ve been infected with COVID-19 in the past, it’s still recommended that you be vaccinated. All the immunizers in our community look forward to welcoming you in our clinics, pharmacies, and doctors’ offices.
• Every percentage point we climb in vaccination coverage in our population reduces transmission at the community level.
• Please plan to follow public health guidance this coming holiday season. This will be the highest risk period of the year. Please do what you can to reduce the risk for yourselves and your loved ones.
• Thank you, stay safe.