COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health
Public Health and Emergency Services
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Dashboard changes

• We will move our dashboard update time from 10:30 a.m. each day to 1:30 p.m., starting tomorrow.
• Due to the new provincial case and contact management tracking system, positive case information is automatically entered into our system at all hours of the day.
  o Our current reporting cycle is 5 p.m. to 5 p.m., which means we are always reporting case data split over two days.
  o Moving our dashboard update to 1:30 p.m. allows us to have a reporting cycle from midnight to midnight for the previous day, rather than 5 p.m. to 5 p.m.
• In addition, because outbreaks in workplaces, schools, child care settings and long-term care and retirement homes can be declared outside of operational hours, moving the update to 1:30 p.m. will allow us more time to notify affected individuals/institutions.
• This change will not only make the reporting more timely, it will help to clarify our daily totals and it will minimize cases added to previously reported totals.
• There will be times when case data may be adjusted, due to ongoing follow-up and case management as well as the transfer of cases between jurisdictions.
• It is important to remember that the data is subject to change, especially for cases or outbreaks that are still under investigation.

Overall trends

• In Waterloo Region, at this time, our rate of new cases is not accelerating.
  o Our rate of new cases is approximately 17 per 100,000 per week.
  o The average rate of new cases for Ontario is 37 per 100,000 per week.
The highest rates are in areas such as Toronto, Ottawa, Peel and now York (with rates between 50 and 70 per 100,000 per week).

- In Waterloo Region, the 7-day moving average of per cent positivity of tests has recently fluctuated between 1.0% and 1.2%, and therefore has not increased beyond the 1.2% mentioned at my last update 2 weeks ago.
  - This is another indication that infection rates have not continued to accelerate in our community.
- This is in no small part due to the efforts of our residents, for which I am grateful.
- However, we remain in a precarious state, similar to other mid-size regions in Ontario.
- We need to remain diligent with our public health practices.

**Trends in Waterloo Region**

- Locally, we continue to see our highest case growth in the 20-29-year-old, and 10-19-year-old, age categories, but cases are also increasing among middle-aged adults and are starting to creep up among older adults.
  - Our number of care homes under outbreak has started to trend up.
    - Currently there are seven outbreaks in long-term care and retirement home settings.
  - Our number of hospitalizations, while remaining low, has also started to gradually increase.
  - We have not had additional deaths in the second wave, to date.
- Our outbreaks to date in care homes, work settings, and in schools have remained well controlled.

**Across the Province**

- In Ontario, there has been steady increase in hospitalizations.
- Health units continue to see clusters associated with large, social gatherings, including indoor birthday parties, family and friend gatherings, and household-to-household visits.
- There have been outbreaks and exposures in gym and sport settings (such as basketball, volleyball, hockey), and an increase in outbreaks in long-term care homes and retirement homes.
- Similar to what has been previously noted, many health units continue to report that the number of contacts per case is high, and cluster investigations involve many locations and businesses.

**Fitness and Sport Activities**

- In light of increased risks being observed in Ontario (e.g. SpinCo outbreak in Hamilton and other outbreaks in Ontario), the Province is reviewing the risk
associated with gym and fitness facilities, to determine whether additional public health measures may be required.

- Provincially as well as locally, we have also seen situations of increased risk in recreational group sport activities. There have been outbreaks elsewhere in Ontario and, locally, we have had cases where multiple teammates have had to self-isolate because of physical activity in close contact with cases and without masks.
- While we await the results of the provincial review, I am providing the following advice for all settings:
  - Close contact with immediate household members only;
  - Distance and mask with everyone else;
  - Outside is safer than inside; and
  - Stick to smaller groups. Smaller is safer.
- More specific advice, applicable to fitness and sports settings, includes:
  - Consider expanding online offerings (e.g. online fitness classes)
  - Consider physical distance greater than 2 metres (6 feet) for fitness activities with high intensity (e.g., rapid inhalation, deep exhalation) and/or range of movement (e.g., dance fitness, medicine ball or kettlebell exercises).
    - At a minimum, exercise squares/circle for people to move about should be at least 2 metres apart, edge-to-edge, so people exercising within those spaces do not have an opportunity to get closer than 2 metres to others within their spaces.
  - Ensure good ventilation and bring in fresh air
    - Bring in fresh air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the facility's heating, venting and air conditioning (HVAC) system settings or by opening windows.
    - If this is not possible or practical for the whole facility, focus them in places where crowding may be an issue and areas used for group exercise classes.
    - Avoid recirculation of air as far as practically possible
  - Ensure sufficient contact time for disinfectant products
    - In addition to using disinfectant products that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and have been approved by Health Canada, ensure sufficient contact time for the disinfectant products being used.
    - A product with a longer contact time will require more waiting time between users, so choosing a product with a shorter contact time that is appropriate for the surfaces being disinfected, will ensure an effective disinfection between users.
  - No shouting, no loud music
- Instructors should consider the use of microphones to support physical distancing and avoid the need for raising their voices or shouting.
- Patrons should not be permitted to sing along to the music or shout back at the instructor.

- For more information on workplaces, review the update last week on precautions in workplaces.

Concluding remarks

- We are trying to achieve two goals:
  - We are working to slow the spread of COVID-19, in order to prevent an escalation that can quickly spiral (as we have seen happen elsewhere) and necessitate the need for more significant closures.
    - The more it quickly escalates, the less we are able to use more targeted measures.
  - We are working to slow the spread, in order to keep schools and businesses open, to keep medical procedures and surgeries continuing, and to prevent severe restrictions in long-term care and other vulnerable settings, as much as we can.
- If we are to achieve these goals, as a community we must:
  - Avoid close contact outside of your immediate household.
  - Physically distance and wear a face covering with everyone else.
    - This includes with family members outside of your immediate household, with friends, and with people you are working or studying with.
  - Stay at home and away from others when you are ill. Make an appointment to be tested.
  - Keep gatherings as small as possible.
  - Use outdoor spaces as much as possible.
- Waterloo Region's residents' efforts to date have made a difference in the growth of our cases.
- Let’s keep going, so we can reduce risks for those in our long-term care homes and other vulnerable settings, keep our schools and businesses open, and our medical procedures and surgeries continuing.
- Thank you.