



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

## COVID-19 Update

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Public Health and Emergency Services

October 20, 2020

### 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.
  - Our current reporting cycle is 5 p.m. to 5 p.m., which means we are always reporting case data split over two days.
  - 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.
  - Our rate of new cases is approximately 17 per 100,000 per week.
  - 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.