



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner of Public Health & Emergency Services

September 1, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Overall Trends

- The status of COVID-19 cases in Waterloo Region remains relatively stable.
- As of this morning's dashboard update, there are 42 active cases.
- In the month of August, we have reported 70 cases, which is our fewest cases per month to date.
- A total of 70,280 tests have been performed in Waterloo Region with positive results for approximately 2.1 per cent of all tests.
- There is currently one new outbreak declared in long-term care and one outbreak in a day camp, reported last week.
 - The previous outbreak in long-term care has been declared over.
 - There are no new cases associated with the day camp outbreak.
 - There are no new outbreaks in retirement homes, other congregate care settings or workplaces.
- We have also updated the key numbers on the landing page of our dashboard to include the number of all active outbreaks – not just those in long-term care and retirement home settings.

School outbreak management

- Last week, we received the school outbreak management guidance from the Province which outlines how health units will investigate cases, outbreaks and suspected outbreaks in elementary or secondary school settings.
- This was a welcomed update.
- The guidance outlines the role of health units which includes:
 - Advising school boards on COVID-19 prevention and preparedness
 - Case and contact management

- Outbreak assessment and management
- Ongoing local surveillance of cases
- In a school setting, an outbreak is defined as two or more lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in students and/or staff (or other visitors) where there is an epidemiological link between the cases, within a 14-day period.
 - This means we are looking for a connection between the two cases, where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the school
- An outbreak will be declared over if:
 - At least 14 days have passed with no evidence of ongoing transmission that could reasonably be related to exposures in the school and
 - No further ill individuals associated with the initial exposure are awaiting test results
- As part of our role with outbreak assessment and management, Public Health will:
 - Provide guidance on outbreak control measures
 - Provide recommendations on isolation, partial or whole school dismissal based on the scope of the outbreak
 - Whole school dismissal may be considered if there is evidence of potential widespread and/or uncontrolled transmission within the school
 - Make recommendations on who should seek testing
 - Conduct on-site investigations in the school, as needed

Public Health supporting schools

- In addition to recruiting and onboarding additional public health nurses for schools, we have been supporting our local school boards as they prepare for school.
 - One of our Directors has been acting as a board level liaison, including weekly meetings since the beginning of August to discuss issues and triage questions
 - We have reviewed return to school plans with each school board including both French boards, private schools and parochial schools
 - We also developed a resource package for private schools, in addition to the Ministry of Education's guidance for public schools.
 - We have created resources to assist with the management of positive cases and outbreak management
 - We are developing tools for parents and school staff to aid in decision making regarding symptomatic staff and students, and we have updated our website with information for parents, including FAQs

- We created kid-friendly resources for face coverings, hand washing and hand sanitizer
- And we have developed an infection prevention and control checklist and are beginning our visits to schools this week.

Closing remarks

- We have made good progress, because of everyone's efforts to date.
- As families prepare to return to school, it is essential that we **all** keep practicing the public health measures of physical distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing face coverings.
- It is also essential that we continue to be smart about how we socialize with one another, knowing the risks associated with gatherings in enclosed places or crowded environments.
- Please continue to practice physical distancing with everyone outside your social circle, and look for opportunities to gather outdoors, where you can easily maintain physical distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- The more we keep our infection rates low, the lower the risk for all the sectors that are re-opening or continuing to open up further, whether it be schools, businesses or congregate care settings. We all have a part to play.
- Thank you for your efforts.