



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

## COVID-19 Update

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Public Health and Emergency Services

September 22, 2020

### Overall Trends

- We have started a new wave of COVID-19 in our community.
- I expect that our cases and outbreaks will continue to escalate for at least a few weeks. What happens after that will depend on the actions of all of us starting today.
- As of this morning's dashboard update, there are 142 active cases in Waterloo Region.
- A total of 85,365 tests have been performed in Waterloo Region with positive results for 1.9 per cent of all tests.
- There are currently eight active outbreaks:
  - Three in long-term care settings
  - Two in congregate care settings
  - One in a child-care setting
  - Two workplace settings
- Long-term care, congregate care and child care settings are declared in outbreak when one positive case is detected.
- In workplaces, an outbreak is declared when there are two or more positive cases where there is an epidemiological link between the cases, within a 14-day period, where transmission has occurred or could have reasonably occurred in the workplace.
- The increased community transmission is having a spillover effect, leading to more cases, and sometimes outbreaks, in congregate care settings, daycares, schools, workplaces and other settings.

## Social gatherings

- Over the weekend, Premier Ford announced new gathering limits for unmonitored, private social gatherings.
- The new limits are:
  - 10 people for an indoor gathering
  - 25 people for an outdoor gathering
- The new limits were effective as of Saturday, September 19, 2020.
- These limits were put in place for unmonitored, private social gatherings because of the rise in cases that we are seeing across Ontario.
- We have seen a relaxed approach to public health measures, such as close contact in social settings with others, outside of our bubble, without the use of physical distancing and face coverings.
- The new measures do not apply to workplaces or schools, because these settings have regulations and requirements in place to reduce and limit the spread of COVID-19.
- All residents are reminded that we must continue to practice physical distancing with anyone outside our social circle or bubble and that we need to wear a face covering when physical distance cannot be guaranteed.
- And it is critical that anyone experiencing symptoms, no matter how mild, stay home and reschedule their activities.

## Businesses

- As I mentioned there are already measures in place for business owners and operators to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in these settings.
- Measures in restaurants include, but are not limit to:
  - Recording the name and contact information for at least one member of every party of patrons
    - This contact information is an additional tool to assist with case and contact management
  - No more than 10 people are allowed per table and tables must be 2 metres apart or more
  - Patrons must remain seated at their table unless to pay or use the washroom
  - Hand sanitizer is available for patron use
  - Any music being played should be at a volume where patrons can have a normal conversation or speak to their server, without raising their voice or leaning closer to each other to hear.
- These measures are in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in these settings.

- As a whole, the business community is working very hard to comply and keep patrons safe. If needed, however, enforcement action will be taken if operators are not adhering to these measures.

## Testing

- We have heard from our area hospitals who oversee testing about current demand which, like elsewhere in Ontario, is outstripping current capacity.
- We appreciate all the efforts our testing partners are making to accommodate as many people as they can and to increase availability where they can. They are working around the clock.
- We encourage anyone experiencing symptoms, or anyone who has been directed to seek testing, to do so.
- However, **if you are not in one of these categories, please consider not going to an assessment centre at this time.**
- No one will be turned away, but on a temporary basis, **we need to allow sufficient capacity at our assessment centres for people with symptoms and/or who have been directed to seek testing.**

## Closing remarks

- What we do starting now, will determine how big this wave will be.
- A common finding continues to be that too many people are having close contact with too many other people, going outside their social bubble, without physical distancing or masking.
  - A reminder that, for our personal social bubble, it's the same 10 people or less.
- The increased transmission in our community is having a spillover effect, leading to more cases and more outbreaks, in congregate care settings, daycares, schools, workplaces and other settings.
- We all need to take action now, to flatten the curve, in order to reduce the risk of negatively impacting the re-opening of our economy, our schools, and our community.
- Please re-commit to the public health practices of **small social circles or bubbles, physical distancing** and, if physical distancing cannot be guaranteed, **wearing a face covering.**
- Continue to wash your hands often, for at least 15 seconds.
- And please do not go to work, school, or gather with others when you begin to have symptoms, even mildly so.
  - Our case investigators have found that people are being less careful about this too. Please do not let your guard down about this either.

- With Homecoming this weekend, we're asking all residents to make smart choices.
  - Please avoid **enclosed** or **crowded spaces**.
  - Please avoid **close contact** with anyone outside your social circle.
- Let's work together and protect each other.