



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Acting Medical Officer of Health

May 11, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Overall Trends

- Sadly, we continue to see COVID-19 deaths in our community. To date, 103 people have died in our community.
- I wish to express my deepest condolences to all the families, friends, and caregivers who have lost loved ones to COVID-19.
- There are currently 12 long-term care or retirement homes in outbreak.
- 17 outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes have been declared over
- 493 people have now recovered from COVID-19 in our community.
- While community spread appears to be slowing down, and a number of outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes are well controlled and/or being declared over...
- Our gains are still precarious. COVID-19 is still a significant threat. And if we are not careful, cases and outbreaks could rapidly escalate again.
- This is why, as Ontario is very slowly starting to lift restrictions, we need to be very careful and proceed very cautiously.
- By and large, we need to stay the course.
- We still need to:
 - Avoid gatherings
 - Maintain physical distancing
 - Wash our hands diligently
 - Stay at home when we start to feel sick. Even when only mildly so.
 - And, for now, continue to limit the number of times we go out

Non-medical masks

- In addition, the general public can consider the use of non-medical masks, such as cloth masks or face coverings, especially if they find themselves in

situations where they may not be able to maintain physical distancing from others.

- You have to be careful with masks though:
 - You have to be careful it does not lead you to increase the number of times you touch your own face (e.g., to adjust the mask).
 - You need to practice diligent handwashing, before and after manipulating your mask.
 - You also need to be careful that it does not give you a false sense of security.
- Non-medical masks can be an additional tool in the toolbox to help prevent the spread of the virus, because wearing a mask can help you contain your own droplets.
- It's analogous to "coughing into your sleeve, or coughing into a tissue."
- So it can help you protect others.
- But it cannot be relied on to protect you from COVID-19.
- And it cannot replace in any way the public health measures that I mentioned earlier.
- So, as we gradually lift our measures, people can consider this additional measure, especially if they may find themselves in situations where they cannot maintain physical distancing.
- Finally, please remember that medical-grade masks and respirators must be reserved for health-care workers.

Closing Remarks

- About two months ago, we began to see public health measures put in place to fight COVID-19.
- This was a new way of going about our lives, and has been a most difficult period for many.
- In those two months, many residents have fallen ill, some seriously, and most sadly, several of our community members have lost their lives.
- And there has been the undeniable economic fallout that has impacted many.
- But as we enter the third month of our measures, we must take hope.
- We must take hope in the knowledge that our collective actions have saved lives, that our collective actions have allowed our health care system to cope, as well as to be able to re-deploy extremely needed resources, such as from the LHIN's Home and Community Care and from the hospitals, to long-term care and retirement homes who have struggled greatly, to help stabilize these homes.

- So I urge you to continue to follow public health measures as the Province very slowly lifts restrictions.
- As I mentioned on Friday, if we continue to work together, we will hold on to the important gains we have made as a community.
- We cannot move too fast, or we will be forced to backtrack and suffer greater health and economic impacts.
- Thank you for continuing to do all that you can for our community.