

Answering Your Questions about COVID-19

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Question 1: Is Ontario going to have vaccine passports?

It's been recommended, but nothing has been decided yet. On Wednesday, Ontario's COVID-19 Science Advisory Table published a 21-page document with recommendations on a vaccination certification program. The table says that a vaccine certificate isn't the same thing as a vaccine passport because a passport allows you to travel internationally while a certificate would allow you to go places locally.

According to the table, vaccine certificates could be useful in reopening higher-risk settings in the province sooner or at an increased capacity. "Higher-risk settings" refers to indoor dining, bars, gyms, cultural and sports events. The document specifies that certain spaces, such as essential and low-risk settings, should not require any sort of certification.

Scientific Director, Dr. Peter Jüni stated that a vaccine certification program could help the province in "[finding] the solution that would help us if the situation gets worse again, to keep the economy and the society open, and just make sure that discretionary spaces such as chains, indoor dining cinema halls ... remain safe and don't contribute to outbreaks."

The document says: "Given the anticipated seasonality of [COVID-19], as well as the possibility of additional variants of concern, establishing ... [a] COVID-19 vaccine certification may be useful if public health measures need to be reintroduced."

Last week, Premier Doug Ford came out strongly against the idea of a vaccine passport. "The answer is no, we're not gonna do it. We're not gonna have a split society," Ford told reporters in response to a question about creating vaccine passports. In the past, Toronto Mayor John Tory has called for the implementation of a vaccine certification program. Read more [here](#).

Source:

1. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-science-table-says-vaccine-certificates-could-be-used-to-speed-up-reopening-of-high-risk-settings-1.5518238>

Question 2: If the vaccine only lasts for months, is Ontario buying boosters?

The government hasn't bought any booster shots yet because they are still being developed by vaccine manufacturers. Booster shots are a different vaccine than the vaccines that we already have. Before the federal government can buy a new vaccine, it has to be evaluated and approved for distribution by Health Canada.

Sources:

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/vaccine-safety-poster.html>
2. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/moderna-co-founder-says-covid-19-booster-shots-will-almost-certainly-be-needed-1.5501545>
3. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/pfizer-biontech-covid19-booster-data-experts-1.6098910>

Question 3: Can I go to my day program in September if I can't wear a mask?

Yes, you can! According to Subsection 2 (4) of the Roadmap to Reopen, the requirement to wear a mask or face covering does not apply to people who:

- have a medical condition that inhibits their ability to wear a mask or face covering;
- is unable to put on or remove their mask or face covering without the assistance of another person;
- is receiving residential services and supports in a residence listed in the definition of “residential services and supports” in subsection 4 (2) of the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

There are more conditions where you can be allowed to not wear a mask, and you can read them [here](#) under Subsection 2 (4).

However, Section 3.1 of the Roadmap to Reopen makes it clear that everyone else will have to wear a mask.

According to Section 3.1 (1), “every person on the premises of a business or organization that is open shall wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin during any period in which they are in an indoor area of the premises.”

According to Section 3.1 (2), people must “wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin during any period in which they are,

- in attendance at an indoor organized public event permitted by this Order; and
- within two metres of another individual who is not part of their household.”

Sources:

1. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21520>
2. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200263>

Question 4: Is the province going to shut down again because of unvaccinated people? How is that fair to people who got the vaccine?

I haven't seen any announcements that the province could shut down again, but it does look like we might not move out of Step 3 of the Roadmap to Reopen as soon as the province had originally planned. In that case, things wouldn't close down, but we'd stay at the current level

of restrictions. The provincial government's plan is still to leave Step 3 and lift virtually all remaining public health restrictions after at least 80% of those 12 and older have been partially vaccinated and 75% have been fully vaccinated. But it looks like there's a chance that this could change.

On Tuesday, Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore suggested that the province needs to set a higher target in order to fully account for the risk of the Delta variant, which is believed to account for more than 90% of all new COVID-19 cases in Ontario. Specifically, he would like to see 90% of the population aged 12 and up to be fully vaccinated before we leave Step 3.

Dr. Moore says that there are still about 2.4 million eligible individuals who have yet to receive even their first shot. Because of the Delta variant, he's concerned that there will be outbreaks in communities with low vaccination rates like what we're seeing in the southern United States.

I think it's completely understandable that you're frustrated at the situation. It's extremely frustrating to see people who could get the vaccine wait because they're counting on other people getting vaccinated. If it's any consolation, the Roadmap to Reopen is based on two things:

- 1) how many people in the province are vaccinated, and
- 2) improvements in key public health and health care indicators, including those in the hospital and intensive care unit with the virus.

By getting vaccinated, you're helping those public health indicators in two ways:

- 1) you're greatly reducing your chance of developing severe COVID-19 that would require you to be hospitalized, which lowers the number of people in hospital, and
- 2) you're contributing to herd immunity and reducing other people's chance of ending up in hospital with the virus.

Source:

1. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-s-top-doctor-suggests-new-vaccination-target-to-account-for-risk-posed-by-delta-variant-1.5516590>

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If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at www.ontario.ca/coronavirus. Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675