

Coronavirus: COVID-19
Current Update – March 24, 2023

Note: The weekly COVID-19 updates and articles will finish on March 31, 2023. The final weekly update and article will be posted next week.

Public Health Ontario’s Weekly COVID-19 Summary

Public Health Ontario (PHO) warns us to interpret these trends with caution because they are not entirely accurate. COVID-19 cases, contacts, and outbreaks are only being managed in high-risk populations and settings. There is also a delay in reporting, especially with severe outcomes and deaths. Reported case counts are a severe underestimate of the actual extent of COVID-19 infections in Ontario.

Last week, indicators for COVID-19 were similar compared to the previous week. The number of reported COVID-19 cases in Ontario was 3,594 compared to 3,751 the week before. Last week, there were 213 reported COVID-19-related hospitalizations, which is lower than the week before, and 21 reported COVID-19-related deaths, which is also lower than the week before.

The total number of confirmed, ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks in high-risk settings is 90, up from 86 outbreaks the week before. The number of outbreaks increased in congregate living settings, such as group homes/supportive housing, shelters and correctional facilities (from 15 to 19) and Long-Term Care homes (from 28 to 31). The number of outbreaks decreased in hospitals (from 23 to 22) and retirement homes (from 20 to 18).

Source:

1. https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/nCoV/epi/respiratory-virus-overview-ontario.pdf?rev=448a6b1f6d3496db3e95406d2ca2653&sc_lang=en

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COVID-19 Response Focus Group

The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, Toronto Chapter in collaboration with the Accessibility Collaborative is hosting a COVID-19 Response Focus Group.

When: Thursday March 30, 2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Who: This focus group is open to individuals with disabilities living in Toronto and organizations in Toronto that serve persons with disabilities and marginalized communities.

This session aims to gather your feedback, concerns, and recommendations regarding responses to the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on how the City of Toronto supported

persons with visual impairment, Deaf and disabled people, and other marginalized communities during COVID-19.

We will explore what went well, the challenges encountered along the way, where we are now, and what needs to be in place should another public health crisis occur in future so disability communities are not left behind.

To register for this focus group, please fill out the brief questionnaire below and return via email TODAY (March 24th) to aebctoronto@gmail.com

Please note: this session will be recorded for internal purposes only, such as note-taking and review.

Registration Questionnaire

We would like to know the following details to assist us with understanding representation for this focus group. All information shared will be kept strictly confidential.

Name:

Organization (if applicable):

Email:

Phone:

Preferred method of contact:

Please answer the Demographic Questions and indicate with an X before your choice.

Age: Under 18, 18 – 29, 30 – 49, 50 – 64, 65 and over, Prefer not to answer

Gender: Male, Female, LGBTQT2S, Other, Prefer not to answer

Occupation:

Student: high school, secondary, post-secondary, graduate level

Prefer not to answer

Employment:

(Occasional, part-time, full time), Self-employed, Unemployed, Retired, Other,
Prefer not to answer

Ethnicity: African, South Asian, East Asian, Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), Latino, Middle Eastern, Caucasian, Other, Prefer not to answer

Geography:

Which neighbourhood in Toronto do you live in? For example: Parkdale, North York etc.
Prefer not to answer

Personal Information and Access Support:

Do you identify as a person with a disability? If yes, you can specify if comfortable.

Will you require accommodations to participate in an online consultation? If yes, what accommodations will you require?

Are you representing an organization? If yes, which organization?

Please complete and send the attached pre-screen questionnaire via email to aebctoronto@gmail.com by March 24th.

Please note that there is **limited space available**, and you will be contacted once you have been selected for the focus group. The answers you provide are strictly for demographic reporting, and your name will not be attached to any of our reports.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please call: 437-999-3839.

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Spring into Wellness Fair

Bring your family and friends and join in for a day of wellness education! This is a collaborative effort between the Black Creek Humber Summit VET and Faith Collaborative Vaccine Engagement Teams.

- Music, free food, free raffle tickets & giveaways (while supplies last)
- Blood pressure and blood sugar checks
- COVID-19 vaccines
- Health screening resources
- Mental health education
- Community agency resources

When: Saturday, March 25th, 2023 from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

Where: Gord & Irene Risk Community Centre. 2650 Finch Ave W, North York, ON M9M 3A3

Please see the link below for more information and registration:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/spring-into-wellness-fair-tickets-565161572477>

Vaccine Clinic at Fairbank Memorial Community Centre

When: March 28th from 1:00 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: 2213 Dufferin Street. There is limited parking beside the building.

The Pfizer bivalent (updated) booster is being offered to anyone who is 5 years old on the day of vaccination and older. The Moderna bivalent booster is being offered to anyone who is 18 years old on the day of vaccination and older. Regular boosters are also available. If you choose, the flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine can be taken together.

Both appointments & walk-ins are welcome. Please bring a piece of photo ID & your OHIP card (also called Ontario health card). Book your appointment by contacting York-Fairbank Centre at (416) 651- 8300 or yorkfairbankscvaccine@gmail.com.

Click [here](#) to see more places where you can get COVID-19 vaccines in Toronto!

Message from the City of Toronto

It is important for everyone 6 months old and older to stay up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccinations.

- The levels we use to measure the prevalence of COVID-19 are stable in Toronto.
- The variant XBB.1.5 is now the dominant variant in Ontario, and it's projected to increase to 66.1% by March 8, 2023 ([source](#)).
- Early data from the CDC shows that the vaccines can provide protection against this variant from severe infection ([source](#)).
- Anyone 5 years and older who has not gotten a bivalent vaccine booster after September 1, 2022, should still get their booster for stronger protection against this new variant.

In addition to getting vaccinated, we can reduce the spread of COVID-19 by continuing to:

- Follow public health measures (click [here](#) to learn more) and use layers of protection (click [here](#) to learn more)
 - Stay home if you are sick or have symptoms, get tested and treatment if you are eligible. Click [here](#) for information on testing and click [here](#) for information on treatment.
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At-risk Canadians should get additional COVID-19 bivalent booster this spring, according to NACI

Canadians who are at risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 are being advised to get an additional booster dose this spring.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization, or NACI, says that includes adults 80 and up, those living in long-term care homes, and those living in other congregate settings for seniors or those with complex medical needs.

NACI is also calling on adults 18 and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised, either due to medical treatment or an underlying health condition, to get a booster shot.

NACI says adults between 65 and 79 should also get vaccinated, especially if they do not have a known history of being infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

The committee says the Omicron-containing bivalent mRNA-based vaccines are the preferred option for booster shots. The recommended interval is six or more months from the last COVID-19 dose or infection with the virus, whichever is longer.

NACI says it will continue to monitor emerging evidence on the virus, including how long protection from bivalent boosters lasts, to provide further recommendations on the timing of subsequent boosters, if they are warranted.

Source:

1. https://www.thestar.com/life/health_wellness/2023/03/03/at-risk-canadians-should-get-covid-19-bivalent-booster-shot-this-spring-naci.html

Request Drive-Through Vaccinations for Children with Disabilities in East Toronto

- South East Toronto Family Health Team (SETFHT) is offering drive-through vaccinations for children aged six months and older with disabilities.
- Parents, caregivers and families who need this service should e-mail info@setfht.on.ca with their request.

Toronto's City-Run Clinics

[Appointments](#) are strongly recommended at this time for each person being vaccinated. COVID vaccine appointments can be booked online or by calling 1-833-943-3900 (TTY 1-866-797-0007). City-run clinics are also currently accepting walk-ins.

Everyone aged 6 months and over can safely get the COVID-19, and flu vaccine at the same time. These locations are accessible. Please bring all required mobility devices with you. You don't need a health card, but you need to bring some form of identification with you. ([source](#))

- **Metro Hall:** 214 Wellington St. W., Monday to Thursday, noon to 6 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Crossroads Plaza:** 2625 Weston Rd., Monday to Thursday, noon to 6 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **East York Town Centre/Thorncliffe Park Community Hub:** 45 Overlea Blvd., Tuesday to Friday, noon to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **1 Eglinton Square:** Tuesday to Friday, noon to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Cloverdale Mall:** 250 The East Mall, Tuesday to Friday, noon to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Mitchell Field Community Centre:** 89 Church Ave., Tuesday to Friday, noon to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Accessibility/Accommodation at City-Run Clinics

All City-run clinics are able to offer accommodation. Each clinic has parking near the entrance, ramps, elevators, and wheelchairs. Staff are also on site at each clinic to support as necessary. Clients who need a care provider or service animal with them will be accommodated. There are also privacy rooms available upon request.

If you require an accommodation, alert a staff member upon arrival or at any time while at the clinic.

Vaccine Clinic Accommodation Request

You may also request an accommodation ahead of your appointment by filling out the Vaccine Accommodation Survey (click [here](#)). You will be asked the date and time of your vaccination appointment, and a public health nurse will contact you within two business days to confirm the details of your request.

Examples of accommodations they can provide include:

- The use of a private area in the clinic to receive the vaccine
- Using a guide to help navigate the clinic

- Access to a cot to lie down after you have received the vaccine
- Access to ASL interpretation (at least 48 hours' notice required)

If you need assistance filling out the survey or requesting accommodation please call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 (TTY: 416-392-0658).

The 519 Wellness Hub

Access COVID-19 vaccines, flu vaccines, and other health services at the 519's low-barrier, drop-in wellness hub. Ontario Health (OHIP) or Interim Federal Health (IFH) card not necessary, but good to bring.

Accessibility: The clinic takes place on the third floor. The 519 is an accessible facility with a ramp, elevator, and all-gender washrooms.

When: Every Wednesday until March 29, From 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: 519 Church Street.

Health services:

- COVID-19 vaccines: first and second dose and bivalent booster available (for those eligible)
- Flu (influenza) shot
- Referrals for catch-up vaccines: HPV, Hep B, meningitis, and shingles (for those eligible)
- Blood sugar and blood pressure checks
- Health ambassadors will work with you to explore options for accessing health and social support services
- Free HIV self-testing
- Stay tuned for potential mental health screening coming up!

Questions? Email community@The519.org.

SickKids COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

SickKids Hospital is hosting weekly COVID-19 vaccine clinics for any infant/child aged six months to under five years who requires accommodations due to medical complexity, developmental disorder, mobility challenges, communication, behavioural and other specialized needs (including significant fear of needles).

This clinic will happen each Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. More dates and times are expected to become available soon.

It's by appointment only. To make an appointment, you need to be referred through your doctor. For any questions regarding patient referrals, contact mobile.vaccination@sickkids.ca.

Do you have questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine for children? Book an appointment with the SickKids COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service. Visit sickkids.ca/vaccineconsult to book an appointment!

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Health Connect Ontario - 811

Connect with a Registered Nurse day or night for free, secure and confidential health advice.

Check your symptoms, get health advice with referrals to local & specialized services as needed and access to a medical library. Access safe, high-quality care and avoid unnecessary visits to the emergency room. This service is an easy way to get connected to care you or your loved ones need, but it does not replace your other touch point with your health care provider. In a medical emergency call 911 immediately.

OHIP not needed. Anonymous calls accepted.

Refugee Health Hotline calls are now redirected automatically to 811

Online (including live chat): [Ontario.ca/healthconnectontario](https://ontario.ca/healthconnectontario)

Call: 811 or toll free TTY line 1-866-797-0007

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Ontario's COVID-19 Vaccine booking portal:

Those eligible for a vaccine can book here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>.

Or by phone at: 1-833-943-3900.

For general information about vaccines, call: 1-888-999-6488.

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In Toronto? Here are two transportation options to go to your vaccine appointment:

1. The Ontario Community Support Association's Accessible Drive-to-Vaccines program provides door-to-door rides to vaccination sites for people with disabilities, including seniors with mobility issues. You must have a vaccination appointment booked. You need to request a ride at least 48 hours before the appointment. To book, call 211 or click [here](#) to request an appointment online.

2. Wheel-Trans is committed to providing vaccine rides to the elderly and people with disabilities in Toronto. Wheel-Trans is offering individual rides to City-run mass vaccination sites, pharmacies, doctor's offices, and clinics that are giving out vaccines. Customers may be joined by one Support Person on their Wheel-Trans ride.

You may be eligible for Wheel-Trans service if your disability prevents you from using the TTC's conventional transit for all or part of your trip.

If you are not yet a Wheel-Trans customer, and you think you may qualify for Wheel-Trans service, you are invited to apply by calling Wheel-Trans Customer Service at 416-393-4111, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Existing Wheel-Trans customers can book their rides to and from their vaccine appointments by calling Wheel-Trans Reservations at 416-393-4222, seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. or through the Wheel-Trans Self-Booking Website. Access the website by clicking here: <https://mywheel-trans.ttc.ca/SelfBooking2020/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fSelfBooking2020>.

Upcoming Events:

North Yorkers

The Communication Enrichment Class (ongoing)

The class runs virtually on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1 p.m. Class is on pause for the holiday season and will resume on January 10, 2022. You can find the online blog at <https://nydpcec.wordpress.com/> where class activities will be posted before each class. If you or someone you know has a communication disability and may be interested in participating in the class, please contact Jessica, our Manager of Client Services via email at jessica.nydp@gmail.com.

March of Dimes

One to One Peer Support Program

The One to One Peer Support program is still running. No one understands quite like somebody who has lived the same experience. Our Peer Support program pairs caregivers with peers who are also experienced in caregiving and can offer practical advice and support by phone or a video chat. Contact Angie Clark by email at aclark@marchofdimes.ca or call 1-905-301-8114 for more information or to get connected.

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If you or someone you know uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), and requires resources related to COVID-19, please contact Jessica (jessica.nydp@gmail.com) and she can assist you in accessing and/or creating various communication tools.

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:

Health Connect Ontario: 811
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

Please refer to previous updates as lots of important information has been provided that may still be relevant. If you have any questions or require more information on how you can protect yourself and those around you from the COVID-19 virus, please contact our Senior Manager of Client Services/Lead AAC Facilitator Jessica at 416-222-4448 or jessica.nydp@gmail.com.