

Coronavirus: COVID-19
Current Update – March 31, 2023

Note: This is the final weekly update.

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 3,405 compared to 3,573 the week before. Last week, there were 243 reported COVID-19-related hospitalizations, which is lower than the week before, and 30 reported COVID-19-related deaths, which is the same as the week before.

The total number of confirmed, ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks in high-risk settings is 61, down from 94 outbreaks the week before. The number of outbreaks decreased in hospitals (from 22 to 17), Long-Term Care homes (from 32 to 13), and in congregate living settings, such as group homes/supportive housing, shelters and correctional facilities (from 19 to 10). The number of outbreaks stayed the same in retirement homes (21).

Source:

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

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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.

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

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.