

Ontario's Three-step Plan to Lift COVID-19 Restrictions

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Beginning Monday January 31, 2022, the province of Ontario is set to begin their reopening plan. [Please see here](#) for a full list of what restrictions will be lifted and on what dates.

As of Monday, Ontario is also set to resume non-urgent surgeries, which is proving to be one of the most anticipated events in the first stage of reopening. The restrictions put into place at the beginning of the year are said to have affected an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 procedures a week. This restriction was put into play to preserve the availability of hospital space for any incoming urgent COVID-19 cases.

Alex Hilkene, a spokeswoman for Health Minister Christine Elliott, says the first stage will include pediatrics, diagnostic services, cancer screenings, some ambulatory clinics, private hospitals, and independent health facilities. Hilkene noted this does not mean all hospitals will immediately resume the surgical and procedural activities permitted.

With the restrictions beginning to be lifted, we are seeing a lot of skepticism on whether this choice is a good thing, or if it will cause a rise in COVID-19 cases once again. Other updates to the list of restriction changes include the government not requiring businesses in the service industry to continue to contact trace, as well as no more work from home orders in other industries. However, businesses are still able to choose what is the best course of action for themselves, and can continue to do both if decided on by the company.

In wake of easing the restrictions, at a news conference on Thursday, Ontario Chief Medical Officer Dr, Kieran Moore said, “In the face of Omicron, I absolutely think we have to start to understand we have to learn to live with this virus and we've let our lives be controlled for the last two years in a significant amount of fear and now we're going to have to change some of that thinking.”

The government is continuing to recommend that the two initial vaccinations, along with the third booster is the best action to take towards protecting one’s self from the virus. All other forms of protection such as social distancing, wearing a well fitted mask, keeping social circles small, etc., paired with a full vaccination status all helps reduce the chances of contracting COVID-19.

Even in the midst of daily case counts continuing to drop, we are still seeing fifty-seven per cent of the province's long-term care homes experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks. As we see restaurants opening up again, as well as other businesses throughout the province, we must work together to as cautious and safe as possible while we continue to move forward in this uncertain time.

Sources:

- 1: [Ontario to begin resuming non-urgent surgeries on Monday - CityNews Kitchener](#)
- 2: [Ontario to begin resuming non-urgent surgeries on Monday | Globalnews.ca](#)
- 3: [Non-urgent surgeries resume on Monday in Ontario | CTV News](#)
- 4: [COVID-19: Reduce Virus Spread Guide – City of Toronto](#)

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