

Ontario braces for 6th wave of COVID-19

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With Ontario dropping most COVID-19 restrictions, including the masking mandate, we may begin seeing a rise in COVID-19 cases once again, and public health indicators show that there has already been an increase of virus-related hospitalizations over the last week.

Due to limited PCR testing, the exact number of individuals with positive cases of COVID-19 are uncertain. However, rapid antigen tests are still widely available at this time through some grocery stores and pharmacies, and are recommended to be taken upon any symptoms, or close contact with suspected cases.

Healthcare professionals have voiced their concern over the number of patients currently being admitted into hospitals upon the masking mandate being lifted. During this time, health services are still experiencing a nursing shortage, which adds to the already stressful situation at hand.

Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious diseases expert with University Health Network, said “We’re in the very early part of a wave in not just Ontario, but also probably many other parts of the country,” he said. “What’s not quite clear is how big is this wave going to be, and how significantly will this impact us?” Bogoch said numbers such as hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care units are “delayed metrics.”

“I don’t think anyone would be surprised if in a few days, or sometime next week we start to see a rise in hospitalizations as well, that corresponds with the rise in cases,” he said.

“I appreciate that in much of Canada, the mask mandates have been lifted,” he said. “But you know, it’s still a really good idea, especially with a rise in COVID in the community setting, to wear a mask in those indoor settings.”

These statements ring true, we as individuals are the ones who can help keep hospitalizations low, if we continue to follow recommendations to stop the spread of COVID-19. Even

though the mask mandate has been lifted, many are still opting to continue wearing them in public settings. This along with vaccination, and other practices such as regularly washing hands and keeping a six-foot distance from others will all help to combat the rate of infection.

Doug Ford has stated that the province is prepared for an increase in cases and hospitalizations but has not mentioned if they will reintroduce public health measures in response. He has stated that we must “move forward in a cautious way.”

Sources:

- 1: <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2022/03/30/ontario-nurses-breaking-point-sixth-wave-covid19/>
- 2: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8719098/ontario-covid-wave-march-2022/>

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