

Coronavirus: COVID-19

Current Update – September 22, 2023

Public Health Ontario's Weekly COVID-19 Summary

The number of reported COVID-19 cases from September 3 to September 9, 2023 was 1,831. The total hospitalizations due to covid in the past week was 136, and the total deaths caused by covid was 12. The total number of covid-19 outbreaks in Ontario during this period was 98.

A new variant of Omicron , Pirola, has been detected in Canada and a few other countries is being closely tracked by health officials because it is the most highly mutated version of the coronavirus since the emergence of the Omicron variant of concern in 2021.

Viruses mutate all the time, effectively every time they reproduce within a host cell, and sometimes those mutations lend a survival advantage that means the mutated kind replaces what came before.

In the British Medical Journal, Francois Balloux, professor of computational systems biology and director of University College London's Genetics Institute, said the most plausible origin of this new variant known as Pirola was that a person with a weakened immune system was infected with an Omicron variant for a long time, more than a year, and in that time the mutations emerged within the single person, and then this new mutated virus spread back into the community.

The concern is that this variant may be more efficient at evading the immune responses of people who have COVID antibodies, either through previous infection or vaccination or both. This is not to say these people are at greater risk of illness. It can, of course, also infect people who are neither vaccinated nor previously infected, and who therefore have no specific COVID immune response at all.

Sources:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Infectious-Disease/Respiratory-Virus-Tool>

<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/pirola-covid-variant>

More Updates about the vaccine:

Health Canada approved an updated Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday in hopes of boosting the population's protection against the latest strains of the virus ahead of the fall and winter season.

Health Canada is also reviewing new vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Novavax on a "priority basis." Drugmakers have been updating their vaccines to better match newer strains of the virus, including the Omicron sub variants that are currently circulating.

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam previously told CBC News these latest shots are more closely tailored to current variants, which should allow them to better ward off infections this season.

It's important for people who feel sick to take a COVID-19 test to find out which bug they're fighting. Testing will be particularly important during the coming influenza season, because COVID-19 symptoms can look a lot like the flu.

Being able to distinguish whether you have COVID or whether you have the flu may have implications for treatments that you get. If you have any high-risk conditions, it's important to know that you have COVID so you can talk to your doctor and get the proper treatment as soon as possible.

Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/covid-19-flu-season-2023-q-and-a-1.6963237>

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 healthcare 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): <https://health811.ontario.ca/static/guest/chat-online>

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

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.

Upcoming Events:

North Yorkers - The Communication Enrichment Class (ongoing)

The class runs virtually on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1 p.m. 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 jdunn@nydp.ca

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.

If you or someone you know uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), and requires resources related to COVID-19, please contact Jessica (jdunn@nydp.ca) 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 jdunn@nydp.ca.