

Community Update – August 17, 2020

Emerging Wisely Current State: Relaxing Phase 2 – Next Steps

Individual Canadians Remain Our First Line of Defense Against COVID-19

Today's Community Update is again from the Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer.

"There have been 122,087 cases of COVID-19 in Canada, including 9,026 deaths. 89% of people have now recovered. Labs across Canada have tested 4,778,360 people for COVID-19 to date. Over the past week, an average of 43,000 people were tested daily, with 0.9% testing positive. Over the last several weeks, national daily case counts have ranged between 350 to 500 cases, with over 380 cases being reported daily during the most recent seven days.

As public health authorities and all Canadians continue with efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19, we are closely monitoring disease activity indicators such as daily case counts, number of cases hospitalised and percentage of people testing positive. Currently, our efforts indicate that we are keeping COVID-19 spread under manageable control but the virus is still circulating in Canada and we must not let down our guard.

The shape of our national epidemic curve over time, including what impact COVID-19 might have this fall, will be influenced by our collective commitment and actions to keep infection rates low. Epidemic modelling tells us that COVID-19 control depends on how quickly and completely local public health authorities can detect and isolate cases and trace and quarantine contacts to limit the spread of the virus. At the same time, our modelling shows us that public health authorities can't control COVID-19 alone. **While we continue to increase capacity across the country to test and trace, individual Canadians remain our first line of defense to limit the spread and impact of COVID-19.**

Our epidemic modelling simulations, and the future scenarios that they predict could happen, are influenced by the number of close contacts between individuals. **The fewer close contacts people have, the lower the overall number of cases and contacts that local public health authorities need to follow up and manage if an exposure does occur.** Protecting this capacity is vital to ensuring chains of transmission can continue to be interrupted quickly enough to keep COVID-19 at a "slow burn" and prevent a large resurgence of cases.

There are several public health actions and everyday individual level precautions that everyone can take to reduce the risk of getting infected and spreading the virus to others who may be at high risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes. Understanding the risks, following local public health guidance and taking appropriate precautions will help us make informed decisions to keep us, our families, and our communities safer. You can find additional information and guidance on the Public Health Agency of Canada website."