

Youth being disproportionately impacted by COVID resurgence

Youth are being disproportionately impacted by an uptick in new cases of COVID-19 across York Region, according to Dr. Karim Kurji, York's Medical Officer of Health.

In his weekly update on Monday, York Region's top doctor said the recent resurgence of COVID-19 across the community has put numbers in line with what we experienced in the first wave last year, but this time there are clear demographic trends.

"[We are seeing] case counts in recent days similar to those we were experiencing at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic," said Dr. Kurji. "We are expecting this increase will continue into the fall and we want to remind residents throughout York Region that while many activities are reopening, COVID-19 is not done with us."

"Some of the characteristics of this recent increase include cases in each of our nine municipalities over the past week, seeing children, youth and young adults being disproportionately impacted with 53 of cases in the past week being under the age of 29. The majority of these cases are in unvaccinated individuals. 44 of our 238 cases were among children younger than twelve who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. Many of whom were household contacts of unvaccinated adults. Unvaccinated young people in their 40s are now being admitted to our ICUs."

Health officials, he added, "cannot stress enough" the importance of getting that second dose of vaccine.

"The COVID-19 vaccines not only protect you from getting seriously ill, but it also prevents people around you from getting sick, too. We must think of each other and our community as a whole, including those who can't get vaccinated, like our children, to get through this. Please do your part and get vaccinated as soon as possible. There are ample opportunities for our residents to seek out vaccination sites and get fully vaccinated."

"I thank everyone who has been fully vaccinated so far. In just six short months, York Region has made incredible progress in administering COVID-19 vaccinations. Today, I am proud to say more than 81 per cent of York Region's residents aged 12 and older have received their first dose vaccination and 73 per cent are fully vaccinated."

As businesses and other destinations continue the reopening process, so too are schools. While Dr. Kurji says information from the Province on how schools will handle outbreaks within their respective walls is forthcoming, he said parents and kids need to be "proactive" in their efforts in ensuring schools resume in a way that is as safe as possible.

"The most important thing parents can do is get vaccinated and ensure youth ages 12 to 17 are fully vaccinated," said Dr. Kurji. "For youths to be fully vaccinated by the first week of school they need to receive their second dose of COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days before schools resume. York Region Public Health continues to explore more opportunities for [more pop-up clinics] to more effectively reach those individuals who have faced barriers in accessing vaccinations, or who have not yet been vaccinated. This approach allows public health to offer clinics in even more convenient locations."

"This data shows that vaccines continue to be our best defence against COVID-19 and in keeping ourselves, loved ones, workplaces, and our community safe. With increased gathering limits and indoor activities permitted under Step 3 of the Roadmap to Reopen, we know COVID-19, especially the Delta Variant, can spread quickly amongst groups. Residents are reminded it is important to continue wearing a mask, physically distance from others, and follow current public health measures, even if you are fully vaccinated."

LOCAL STATS

As of Tuesday, August 10, Aurora has seen a total of 1,864 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the global pandemic, 5 of which remain active.

1,811 cases are now marked as recovered, while 48 cases have proved fatal.

Of the 5 active cases, all are related to local transmission, close contact or unknown exposure.

Between August 2 and August 9, 7 new cases of COVID-19 were reported within Aurora, 64 per cent of which were among unvaccinated individuals 12 and up.