

Ministry of Health

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Ministère de la Santé

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March 12, 2020

Re: Enhanced Public Health Measures for COVID-19

As the outbreak of COVID-19 continues to evolve globally, I am asking all Ontarians to immediately take a number of enhanced measures over the coming weeks to protect themselves from COVID-19 and to help mitigate its spread in Ontario.

As of today, based on my assessment of the clinical risk of COVID-19, I am strongly advising the people of Ontario to avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada. In light of our recent positive cases in young children, if you decide to travel outside of Canada with children, they will be required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon return. I am supporting the Ministry of Education's decision to close all public schools in Ontario for a period of two weeks following the March Break. I am further requesting that colleges and universities immediately look at virtual options to provide services.

Similar to our recent guidance for long-term care and retirement homes, I am asking all licensed child care centres to actively screen children, parents, staff and visitors for any symptoms and travel history that may be related to COVID-19 based on the ministry's case definition. It is critical that we keep COVID-19 out of our child care spaces.

I am also recommending the immediate suspension of all large events and public gatherings of over 250 people. Organizers who have questions about smaller gatherings are encouraged to contact their local public health unit. I call on all Ontarians to recognize the risk of attending public gatherings and to practice social distancing as much as possible until further notice to manage the spread of illness. Organizations that can take advantage of virtual options to continue providing services are strongly encouraged to do so.

I want to remind all Ontarians that there are actions that they should be taking every day in order to protect their health. These include:

- washing your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneezing and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay at home if you are sick. In particular, do not visit a long-term care, retirement home or other congregate living situation.

The majority of patients with COVID-19 experience mild illness. It is therefore vital that Ontarians remain home when they are sick to prevent the spread of illness to others. Yesterday, the government has announced that new measures are being implemented to manage your care at home and to provide you with advice on how and where to seek further care and testing if and when it is needed.

Online and telephone resources will be available to help guide you to further care and potential testing at an assessment centre or other location. Please ensure you consult these resources before you go to an assessment centre. Please check for updates on Ontario's COVID-19 [website](#) for further information on the virus and how to seek care.

I recognize that these measures will be a significant adjustment from your regular routine, but they will be critical to managing the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario over the coming weeks and protecting our most vulnerable populations. I am calling on all Ontarians to cooperate with these public health measures over the coming weeks and I will continue to provide regular updates on the spread of COVID-19 and the measures Ontario is taking to respond.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D Williams".

David Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPS
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Attachments

c: Peter Donnelly, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario